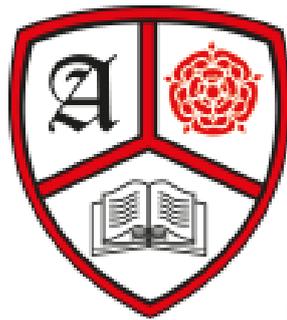


Anderton Primary School



ANDERTON
PRIMARY SCHOOL
01928 551515

Forest School Handbook

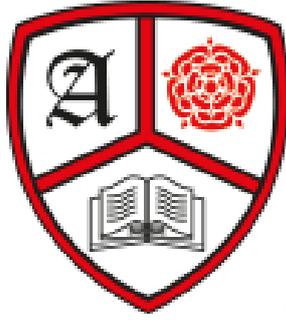


Forest Schools Lead / Coordinator: Lucy Culshaw

Policy Created March 2021 By Lucy Culshaw

Contents

- **Forest School Mission Statement**
- **What is Forest School?**
- **Where will sessions take place?**
- **Who will lead the sessions?**
- **What will the children do?**
- **Forest School delivery**
- **Clothing**
- **Forest School routines**
 - **procedures to be carried out before each session.**
 - **procedures to be carried out at the end of each session.**
- **Forest School Code of Conduct**
 - **Picking up and playing with sticks**
 - **Tree climbing**
 - **Rope and string use**
 - **Carrying and transporting materials**
 - **Digging**
 - **Toileting**
 - **Eating and drinking**
 - **Collecting wood**
 - **Leaving the site**
 - **Forest School rules**
- **Health and Safety**
- **Insurance**
- **Equal opportunities and Inclusion**
- **Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School**
- **Policies**
- **Forest School missing child policy**
- **Emergency Incident Procedures during Forest School**
- **Forest School Leader becomes ill/injured**
- **Risk assessment guidelines and forms**
- **Designated person responsible**
- **Risk Management of tools and equipment**
 - **General rules for tool use**
- **Fire Procedure**
- **Emergency Fire Procedure**



Forest School mission statement.

Through sessions in our Forest School site every child will access learning and development within the natural world around them. Every child will succeed through inspirational, stimulating, hands on experiences, developing their self-esteem, confidence and resilience.

Forest School at Anderton Primary School provides opportunities for and encourages children to:

- develop their personal and social skills
- develop their language and communication skills
- improve physical motor skills
- work through practical problems and challenges
- develop practical skills
- use tools to create, build or manage
- pursue knowledge that interests them
- build confidence in decision making
- evaluate risk
- explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- reflect on learning and experiences
- regularly experience achievement and success
- learn how to manage failures
- discover how they learn best
- improve their concentration skills
- become more motivated
- understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle

The ethos of Forest Schools and the opportunities it provides fit well with the aims of Anderton as outlined online at <https://andertonprimaryschool.co.uk/our-school/core-values/>.

At Anderton Primary School; “We explore, we create, we innovate.”

Our aims are:

- To aim high in all areas of school life
- To provide a curriculum which inspires a love of learning
- To treat ourselves and others with kindness and respect
- To celebrate the individual
- To challenge and encourage independent thinking
- To have a strong relationship between home, school and the wider community.
-

We aim to provide an ethos in school where everyone feels safe both physically and emotionally. All children have the right to be protected and are made aware of the need to be safe in the use of all technologies particularly with regard to social media. Children are made aware of safe internet practice through assemblies, computing lessons and PSHE. All lessons are age appropriate.

What is Forest School?

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that 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.

Where will sessions take place?

Our Forest school site is in the top right hand corner of our school grounds. Although it is currently not the biggest of sites, we hope to increase it's size going forward.

Who will lead the sessions?

The Forest School leader is Mrs Culshaw, HLTA. She commenced her training in October 2020.

What will the children do?

Children taking part in Forest School sessions are given an opportunity to participate in activities in a natural setting on a regular basis. The setting provides a safe environment for them to learn and explore. Activities take place throughout the year and generally in all weathers. Whilst the sessions may provide opportunities to learn and understand more

about the natural world, they also provide opportunities to develop their interpersonal skills.

There are opportunities to learn practical skills that there is often little opportunity to learn in formal school settings or even in the home these days. For tasks such as tree climbing, tool use, (and in the future, fire lighting or cooking) there might be an element of managed risk. However by giving children these opportunities they ultimately become better equipped to manage risk and as a result have the opportunity to grow their self confidence.

Opportunities for reflection and to share experiences are provided and these help with the social and emotional development of participants.

The Forest School leader will act as a facilitator. Although activities are well planned, they will essentially be child led. There will be flexibility in the planning to allow children to pursue their interests, with planning being used to scaffold these.

Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous but it should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas.

The following will give some indication of the type of activities that might be undertaken:

- Den and shelter building
- Wildlife studies
- Habitat development
- Playing team and group games
- Sensory activities
- Tracking games
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional crafts
- Story telling
- Drama
- Imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities
- Tool use
- *Fire lighting (* this is not yet an activity that will be carried out)*
- *Cooking on an open fire (* this is not yet an activity that will be carried out)*

As can be seen the approach is cross curricular.

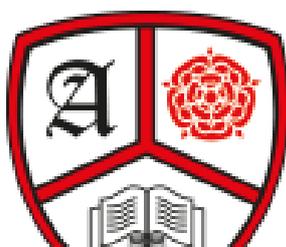
Forest School Delivery

Forest school sessions at Anderton generally follow a common pattern:-

- At the start of each session there will be a short input during which children are reminded of the expectations that are in place for forest school and, any new safety information is relayed. The theme or focus for the week's activities is then introduced.
- A short starter activity usually then takes place.
- The main activity follows. Activities are commonly offered that link into the interests of the children wherever possible. Where tools are being used there is a high emphasis on safety. If the activity requires a high ratio of supervision the group may be split. This is also where cross-curricular links will be made.
- 'Free time'. A key element of the Forest School approach is the opportunity for children to explore a natural environment and pursue their own direction of learning. Therefore, in each session an opportunity for children to pursue their own interests is included. Quite often children will continue with the activity they have started or will continue with something that has sparked their interest in a previous session. Although it is 'free time' there are guidelines in place to ensure the safety of all, which participants soon become familiar with.
- Finally, the group is brought together for a period of reflection. This may involve a review of whatever guided activities have taken place or their independent activities. Whilst this is very much a child led activity it may be guided by the Forest School leader when necessary.

Clothing

As children are likely to be outside in all weathers they need suitable clothing. Outdoor PE kit of tracksuit bottoms, t-shirt, sweatshirt and trainers with an added waterproof jacket meets the basic needs. Wellingtons or walking boots and waterproof over trousers offer greater protection in wet weather conditions. Hat, gloves and scarves are useful throughout the winter months. During the summer period sun hats and sun cream, as outlined in the schools School Sun Safety Policy should be provided.



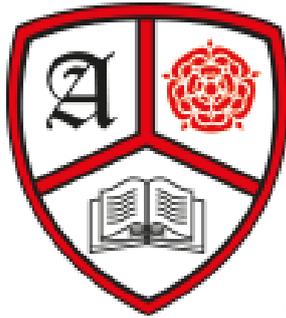
Forest School Routines.

Procedures to be carried out before each session.

- A thorough sweep of the site will be done half termly and then before each session to check for litter, glass, animal faeces, etc. Any such items should be collected using disposable gloves and a plastic bag and disposed of appropriately.
- At the same time boundary fences, gates and hedges will be checked to ensure that they are secure and safe.
- Trees will be checked for any broken or dead branches which may fall.
- Checks will be made to ensure that there are no dead twigs, etc. protruding at eye-level from bushes etc.
- Check weather conditions, if it is unduly windy or a thunderstorm (especially an electrical one) is imminent or has commenced, then the session will be postponed. Forest School sessions will also be postponed in the absence of the Forest School Leader.
- First aid kit and Forest School essentials kit to be checked and replenished where necessary.

Procedures to be carried out at the end of each session.

- Clear away everything.
- Count all the tools back into the storage bags and boxes.
- Count children and adults and ensure that all are accounted for.
- Collect any assessment sheets or observations from adults. Discuss next steps/ideas with adults back at school site present.



Forest School Code of Conduct.

Picking up and playing with sticks.

Children will be allowed to carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but will be made aware to think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks can be dragged or carried with a child at both ends. Sticks must not be thrown, nor will children be allowed to pull them from living trees.

Tree climbing.

During the risk assessment carried out before each session, areas below climbing trees will be checked for sharp objects and the tree will be checked for loose branches. Children are not to climb higher than an adults' arm length or chest height. (This will be taught). Unsafe or tempting trees can be marked with a hazard tape.

Rope and string use.

Children will be encouraged to connect objects with rope/string and to transport materials but will be prevented from tying up other children or themselves! If a child has a good idea and wants, for example, this will be encouraged as it allows for an opportunity to model appropriate knot tying. All string and rope must be collected up at the end of the session.

Carrying and transporting materials.

The children should be encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials either by hand or using ropes. The safe way to lift, by bending your knees and keeping your back straight should be modelled by all adults. Heavier objects will be rolled, dragged or carried by more people.

Digging.

There will be a designated area for digging. Children will be shown how to look after the tools. Children will be shown how to look carefully for insects and their habitats and look after them when they have found them.

Toileting.

Children will always use the toilet before leaving school and going to the woodland site. However, in the case of an emergency a member of staff will take the child back in to school.

Eating and Drinking.

Children will be taught not to eat anything found in the woods through 'stop, no pick, no lick'. We will discuss this together so that children are secure in their knowledge. If we take drinks or snacks outside we will ensure children use hand sanitiser to clean their hands before eating their snack or drinking.

Collecting Wood.

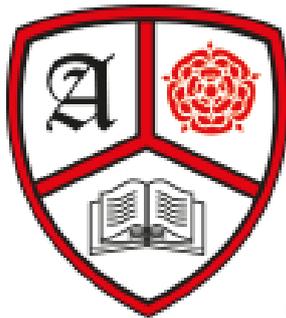
Wood can only be collected from the ground layer of our woodland.

Leaving the site.

The site must always be left as it is found. If artefacts are made using 'found materials' these may be taken off the site and back to school. Shelters will normally be demolished and imported materials taken back into school at the end of each session.

Forest School Rules.

- Look after your Forest School.
- Do not pick anything growing.
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth.
- Stay within the boundaries marked.
- Look above, below and around for hazards.



Health and Safety.

Anderton Primary School sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the schools' approach to the health and safety of the children, staff and visitors to the school.

The following list is additional measures relating directly to Forest School sessions.

1. The person in charge of each Forest School session is always the Forest School Leader.
2. The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in her charge, but all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.
3. All adult helpers must read this handbook and appropriate risk assessments and understand and agree to comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School.
4. The Forest School Leader or assistant will carry a first aid kit and Forest School essentials kit. The kit will contain:
 - A set of spare clothing and footwear.
 - Medication specific to any child in the session (inhalers, epi pens, etc).
 - A bottle of water.
 - A mobile phone.
 - Contact list for each child undertaking activities.
 - Essential survival equipment.
5. The Forest School leader will always carry a mobile in the case of an emergency.
6. In the event of an emergency, the Forest School leader will ensure that the school contacts the emergency services.
7. The Forest School leader will review the risk assessments before every trip to the Forest site.
8. When tools are used the Adult/child ratio will be always be 1:1 There is only one exception to this- the use of potato peelers for stick whittling.

Insurance.

The children Act 2004 and the Health and Safety Work Act 1974 place a number of legal responsibilities on the school. Anderton Primary School has insurance cover appropriate to it's duties under this legislation, including Employer's and Public Liability Insurance.

Responsibility will in most cases rest with the school but staff will take reasonable care, both for themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.

(Copy of school insurance in appendix).

Equal Opportunities, Inclusion and Forest School.

Anderton Primary 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.

We undertake that all children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
- Appreciate and value the differences they see in others.
- Are able to participate safely in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs.
- Are taught in groupings that allow them to experience success
- Use materials that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles
- Are set challenging targets that allow them to succeed
- Participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School.

Anderton Primary School recognises its responsibilities for Child Protection and for confidentiality. The school recognises that effective Child Protection work requires sound procedures, good inter-agency cooperation and a workforce that is competent and confident in responding to child protection situations. A full copy our Safeguarding Policy is held in the school.

Policies

The school is like all educational establishments has a wide range of policies in place. These can be accessed via the school web site at <https://andertonprimaryschool.co.uk/our-school/school-policies/> . Copies of all policies relevant to Forest School can be found in the Appendix.

Forest School missing child policy.

It is the aim of all our Forest School sessions to keep our children safe as an utmost priority at all times. This policy will be applied in all Forest School sessions.

- As soon as it is discovered, that the Head Count at any particular moment, does not agree with that recorded at the start of that session, the situation will be taken very seriously. The Forest School Leader will be informed, if unaware.
- If an immediate recount still shows a shortfall, all activities will be suspended and “Sticky Feet” will be used to gather all learners.
- One adult will be released for a five minute search of the immediate area, whilst another adult occupies the remaining children with a game/song or story. The main aim to prevent anxiety escalating amongst the children, “Sticky Feet” will be carried out once more.
- If the five minute search does not discover the missing child/ or children, the Forest School Leader will take the group back to school, retracing the paths taken earlier. One adult will stay in the area to look, contact will be maintained by mobile phone.
- If the Group and Leader get back to the school building without locating the missing child/children, and if the searching adult has not found anyone, the School Office will be notified to alert staff to help in the search.
- At this point, the Head of School will be notified by the Forest School Leader as to the current situation. The Head of School may choose to alert Police and Parents.
- Forest School Staff should immediately make a record of events and timings and last known position of the child/children. These will be recorded on the Emergency Procedures sheet and logged in the Forest School incident book.

Emergency Incident Procedures during Forest School.

Prior to any Forest School session participants are briefed what they will be expected to do in the event of an emergency situation. The site is fully fenced and enclosed. The procedure is as follows:

- Children with minor injuries will be treated on site by a first aid trained member of staff.
- Major injuries will be dealt with by Forest School Leader. Nominated assistant will phone through to school so that the emergency services can be advised. Assistant(s) will support other children bringing them back to the classroom.
- In the event of the need for evacuation of the site children will be called back to the seating circle, counted and then lined up and walked back into school.
- Full details will be recorded through school incident procedure back at school.
- In the event of a missing child. Children will be taught 123 where are you?
 1. The immediate Forest School area will be searched.
 2. The surrounding areas will then be searched.
 3. The rest of the children will be assembled and taken back to class.

4. Head Teacher will be informed and a parent/guardian and/or police are to be informed.
5. School critical incident procedure will be followed.

Forest School Leader becomes ill/injured

In the event of the Forest School leader becoming ill or sustaining an injury, the session must end. An additional adult must take the lead. Procedures to be followed:-

1. Lead adult to gather children together away from fire (if lit) and do a headcount.
2. Adult to use walkie talkie/mobile phone to call for help, whether that is the School office or 999.
3. Adult to ensure Forest School Leader is out of danger.
4. Extinguish the fire if lit.

Risk assessment guidelines and forms.

A site risk assessment will be carried out half termly and a site sweep made before every Forest school session will take place. In addition an activity risk assessment will be in place for any activity that may require it.

The risk assessment process is as follows.

- We look for hazards
- We decide who might be harmed and how this might happen
- We evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done.
- We record our findings
- We review our assessments regularly and revise them if necessary
- We inform all adults accompanying the group.
- We have a copy with us on an observation board.

Participants, including staff and volunteers, will be informed of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further. When possible all participants will be involved in the risk assessment process as part of their learning.

Particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and management of fire, participants will be taught appropriate and adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe.

Designated person responsible.

The Forest School Leader is Mrs L Culshaw, who is the HLTA at Anderton Primary School. She commenced Forest School Level 3 training in October 2020 and also holds a 3 year Paediatric First Aid Certificate. Mrs Culshaw will carry out all role- safety sweeps, risk assessments and will plan for the sessions (so that relevant curriculum subjects can be incorporated into sessions). Mrs Culshaw and other Forest School assistants will check everyone is wearing the correct clothing etc, prior to the start of each session (a bank of spares is available for anyone with any missing items). To ensure that the children gain confidence, feel safe and get the most from Forest School, it is important that all Teachers and support staff, act at all times as good role models. Mrs Culshaw will give staff any support they need, to, in turn, support the children's experience. She will advise staff who and what we may be observing during Forest School session and ensure that any 'WOW' moments are noted also. The Forest School Ipad will be taken out to each session to take pictures and videos. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that the first aid kit and Forest School essentials kit is taken to the woodland area each session. Mrs Culshaw will be responsible for carrying and issuing the medication of children who require it to and from the woodland area (Inhalers, EpiPens etc.).

Risk Management of Tools and Equipment.

General rules for tool use.

- All tools must have additional risk assessment in the Forest Schools Folder.
- All tools to be stored in school securing, with Forest School leader having overall responsibility and access.
- Forest School Leader has responsibility and safe storage of tools at Forest School site.
- A designated area will be used for activities involving tools.
- Adults and children to sit when using tools.
- Never walk around with tools.
- Children will be taught to ensure they have 'a blood bubble' around them, when using tools.
- Tools are to be clean and sharp before use.
- Children can only use tools with Forest School Leader, on a 1-2-1 ratio basis.

Fire Procedure.

Camp fires are an important part of Forest School.

- Related safety equipment, including water will be kept in close range to the fire.
- Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood. Children will be encouraged to move places if sat in direction of smoke.

- Children will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision of Forest School leader using suitable materials and equipment.
- Fire must always be guarded by an adult.
- All fire must be extinguished at the end of a session-doused with water and stirred until all steam and smoke has ceased. Remains will be checked to see that they have cooled and are safe to leave.

Location: camp fire is situated in an open part of the site and is enclosed by short logs on all four sides then larger seating logs. All children, staff and volunteers must be made aware of fire pit rules from week 1.

A fire will not be lit until all children understand the rules:

1. Stand behind the log
2. Step over and sit down on the log.
3. Stand up, turn around and step over the log.
4. Children only allowed into fire pit area if invited by an adult.
5. Never throw anything into the fire.
6. Children should be knelt down if by the fire.

Emergency Fire Procedure.

In the event a fire became out of control:-

1. Assemble children away from the fire and headcount.
2. Exit School field via the gate.
3. Lead adult to call 999 and send additional adult to the School office.
4. If no signal, then additional adult MUST be sent to the office to request 999 call.
5. Assemble on School playground
6. Second headcount.