

**St Leonard's Church of England
Primary School
Forest School Handbook**

In Jesus' Footsteps, we will grow in grace and knowledge.

Contents Page

1. Introduction to Forest School at St. Leonard's C of E Primary School (Intent, Implement and impact)
2. Insurance
3. First aid and first aid kit
4. Safeguarding
5. Emergency procedures
6. Risk management and risk assessment
7. Fire and fire safety
8. Food safety
9. Tool use and maintenance
10. Toileting
11. Clothing Guide
12. Equipment
13. Planning and observation
14. Photo Permission

1. Intent

St Leonard's Church of England Primary School aims to use the natural outdoor woodland area to offer the children an insight into the Forest School ethos. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It develops emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child's interest will be at the heart of any activity.

Forest School Ethos is shared by trained practitioners across the UK and all over the world. Its origins are based on the Scandinavian model of learning with child-centred, play-based pedagogy at its core.

In 2002 the definition of Forest School was formulated: 'An inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on experiences in a local woodland environment.'

The Forest School ethos has 6 principles (reviewed in 2011 and published by the Forest School association <https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/whatis-forest-school/>) and these are:

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

This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies including:

- Early Years Policy
 - Behaviour Policy
 - Safeguarding Policy
- SEND Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

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How we **Implement Forest School at St. Leonard's**

All children attending our sessions will use a range of natural resources to stimulate creativity, build resilience and become reflective and compassionate children. This is a part of our whole school ethos as shown in our school vision.

Children will have the opportunity to:

- Be reflective around campfires, reflection areas, in dens.
- Build shelters and hammocks.
- Climb and balance
- Use a range of tools from hand drills to bill hooks.
- Create a variety of knots and lashings for different purposes.
- Help to prepare wood, build, start a fire and understand the importance of fire safety.
- Prepare and cook food on an open fire.
- Track animals and bug hunt.
- Make a variety of items from jewellery to musical instruments.
- Collect, group and classify a range of flora and fauna.
- Study the seasons and the changing wildlife.
- Communicate in a range of games and work together to problem solve.
- Develop storytelling and character building in the outdoor environment.
- Develop gross and fine motor skills through play.

The structure of the Forest School Session

Before each session:

- A thorough sweep of the site will be carried out to check for any hazards, for example, litter, glass, animal faeces. Any such items will be removed using disposable gloves and will be put in plastic bags and disposed of accordingly. The school office will be notified of any items found.
- Pathways and trees will be checked for any hazards that could cause injury and trip hazards such as bramble runners and fallen branches.
- Weather conditions will be checked.

During each session:

- Participants will change into appropriate clothing.
- Alternative clothing will be offered where worn clothing is not appropriate and this will be judged by the Forest School Leader.
- Labelled sunscreen should be applied on sunny days which should be provided by parents. Children will apply their own suncream unless they are too young to do so.
- First sessions will incorporate a Health and Safety boundary walk and risk assessment of trees and plants, so they are aware of rules, dangers to avoid and safe play. This will be referred to every session.
- All sessions will use 'Sticky Feet' gathering chant so that children know how they will be gathered during sessions or in an emergency.
- At least one activity will be introduced during each session and will build on the children's interests from the previous session.

To end each session:

- Reflection time: This could include meditation, mindfulness tasks and feedback of likes, dislikes, difficulties and challenges overcome.
- The site will be left tidied, and no trace left.

The **Impact** of St. Leonard's Forest School

Many children will have new experiences during their forest school time and a broad range of activities will be available to act upon children's interests and to learn new skills. The satisfaction that children feel when crafting something new and of use is a valuable learning experience for all children. Children will grow in confidence as a result of the freedom, time and space they are given in their learning. This allows them to demonstrate independence at each individual child's rate.

The children will begin to understand, assess and manage their own risk and safety. This will allow the children to become more independent and show them that life comes with not only risk but also rewards. It also teaches them what their own limits are and that they can push through them. They will see that sometimes we don't always get the desired result the first time but that doesn't make us a failure, it helps us to grow, forcing us to try again in a different way. Forest school encourages and facilitates problem solving, logical thinking, self-reflection and evaluation.

Activities such as sharing tools and participating in play help teach the children to work together as a group, strengthening their bonds and social skills. The review time at the end of each session allows time for self-reflection and for all children to share and celebrate their successes.

The sensory experiences provided by Forest School helps prompt language development, a wider range of higher-level vocabulary that is learnt in situ, with hands-on experience. The adult can play a role of just observing, coming alongside, modelling, supporting, scaffolding or encouraging. Children develop an interest in the great outdoors and respect for the natural world around them. The changing seasons and weather offer a wealth of interest and opportunities.

We measure the impact of our curriculum through the images and videos of the children's practical learning and talking to the children about their learning during reflection (pupil voice). These are included on the school website and on the school Facebook page so parents and other adults can see the images, where permission has been granted.

Our Forest School sessions will be delivered by qualified Level 3 Forest School leaders. They deliver this program following the guidance set out in this document. A copy of all policies and procedures will be shared with all participating adults and kept in the office. This contains vital information needed for each session which includes procedures in the event of an emergency etc.

Equality and Diversity:

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place; reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc. St Leonard's C of E Primary School has a Special Educational Needs Policy, an Inclusion Policy and an Equal Opportunities Policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Forest School Leader will have the overall responsibility for:

- Risk assessments for each session, pre-visit site checks and continuous safety monitoring.
- Planning for sessions, differentiation for individual children's needs.
- Ensuring that once on-site rules are followed and continue to risk assess during the session.
- Ensuring necessary equipment is taken into woodland.
- Administration of first aid and checking first aid kit.
- Supervision of fire use, following procedures set out in this document

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- Supervision of tools use, cleaning and storing.
- Organising emergency procedures.
- Ensure site is left as it was found after every session

Staff/ students / volunteers: will model good practice throughout the session, carry out delegated roles and responsibilities, extend children's learning where appropriate by asking extending questions, support children to manage their own risk, remind children of rules and boundaries, be aware of dangers within Forest School, always monitor levels of safety and support the Forest School leader to run the sessions.

2. Insurance

St. Leonard's C of E Primary School is fully insured via Public Liability Insurance, through Lancashire County Council.

3. First Aid and First Aid Kit

St. Leonard's C of E Primary School has a First Aid Policy which outlines the steps taken during an incident or accident on the school grounds. Additionally, the lead Forest School practitioner maintains an outdoor first aid certificate accredited by the Institute of Outdoor Learning.

All accidents are recorded in line with school policy.

In the unlikely event a serious accident occurs, one of the forest school team will telephone the main school office for assistance. This may include contacting emergency services and/or parents according to the individual circumstances.

The first aid kit contains:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| - Antiseptic wipes | - Protective gloves |
| - Eye irrigation solution | - Micro pore tape |
| - Plasters – a range of sizes | - Foil blanket |
| - Triangular bandages | - Emergency action plan |
| - Medical incident recording book | - |

During campfire sessions there will be an additional burns kit, fire blanket and bucket of water on hand in case of emergency.

All staff will be aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. will be taken into woodland in the class first aid box.

4. Safeguarding

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader and accompanying adults to ensure the safety of children during a forest school session. We are committed to creating an environment in which children are safe and free from harm.

It is the role of the Forest School Leader to minimise the risk of abuse taking place:by:

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Educating children how to stay safe and speak out.

Taking appropriate action should any allegations or disclosures arise and following the school's child protection and safeguarding policy.

The Forest School leader will follow the school's Behaviour Policy, however if the behaviour of an individual, or group of individuals is such that it puts their own and others safety at risk then the individual(s) may be required to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. This will be at the discretion of the Forest School leader.

5. Emergency Procedures and First Aid Emergency action plan:

In the event of an emergency the following will happen:

- Emergency Whistle blown.
- Children advised to put tools down by other adults in surrounding areas and to await further instructions.
- Forest School Leader to assess the situation and remove any hazards.
- Once any hazard has been removed the leader will deal with the incident or follow the first aid procedures in the case of an accident.

Whilst dealing with a first aid incident, the leader will:

- Ensure the safety of all other children within the group by advising other adults present of the situation and ask them to monitor the other children.
- If this leaves an adult alone, children will be called to the area that the leader is in and if necessary, all children will be taken indoors.
- The first aider will follow first aid procedures as described above

Lost child Procedure:

- Head counts will take place at the beginning, during and end of the session.
- All activities will be suspended and the call "Sticky feet, sticky feet" (children reply, "everyone together" whilst walking to regroup on the log seating) will be used to rally all group members.
- One adult will be released to search the immediate area, whilst other adults occupy other children in a song or story.
- If the missing child/children is/are not found, the Forest School Leader will take the group back to school, retracing the paths taken earlier. One adult will stay in the area to continue looking, contact will be maintained by mobile phone.
- If the group and leader cannot locate the missing child/children, and if the searching adult has not found anyone, the school office will be notified to alert any supporting staff to help in the search. At this point, the Headteacher/DH will be notified by the Forest School Leader of the current situation.
- The Headteacher/DHT will then follow the appropriate process. Forest School Staff should immediately make a record of events and timings and last known position of the child/children. These will be recorded in the Forest School Incident book and reports passed to the Headteacher.

6. Risk Management and Risk Assessment

Step 1 Identify significant hazards	Step 2 Identify who might be harmed and how		Step 3 identify precautionary measures already in place
List of significant hazards	Who might be harmed?	Type of harm	Management of risk
<u>Weather – falling trees.</u>	Adults, pupils	Minor to major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to sessions, staff observe weather forecasts and weather warnings • The woodland will not be used in high-wind weather • Site checked before session to ensure no fallen trees or dangerous branches <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children learn to risk assess independently during the session
<u>Exploring the site</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneven ground • Branches and tree roots on the ground • Edging to path broken • Branches and shrubs at eye level • Barbed wire/fences 	Adults, pupils	Minor to major injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site checked before each session to ensure no fallen or dangerous branches • Pupils told to stay well-back/away from any identified hazard that cannot be removed. • Pupils well supervised, awareness talks and reminders • There will always be at least 2 members of staff with a First aid kit, children's inhalers and mobile phone <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting physical development and awareness of the difference in surroundings • Encouraging pupils to be self-aware and support their peers • Children learn to risk assess for themselves
<u>Stream</u>	Adults, pupils	Minor to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils told to stay on the main path

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sloping/slippy bank down to stream ● High drop down to stream in places (e.g. near bridge) 		major injury	<p>well-back/away from the sloping bank near the stream (e.g. crossing bridges)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pupils asked to work in the clearing and not near the water ● Pupils told not to enter the stream unless permission has been given ● Pupils well supervised, awareness talks and reminders ● Pupils shown safe places to enter and exit the stream ● Safe methods of 'scrambling' using all fours to be demonstrated <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pupils to realise the importance of following rules ● Pupils to be self-aware, identify dangers
<p><u>Missing child</u></p> <p>A pupil may wander off or go missing</p>	Adults, pupils.	Minor to major injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pupils told and asked to repeat the physical boundaries set by the teacher ● Regular headcount ● No access out of school grounds/ Upkeep of perimeter fencing and walls <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pupils to realise the importance of following rules and working as a group ● Building relationships and trusting each other
<p><u>Bites and stings</u></p> <p>Pupils may receive a sting from bees/wasps and stinging nettles.</p>	Adults, pupils.	Minor injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● First session includes Health and Safety talk to identify nettles and brambles and the areas they are growing ● Pupils warned not to touch minibeasts (e.g. bees/wasps) and to be aware of stinging nettles. ● Long trousers and closed, suitable footwear to be worn (e.g. wellies, walking boots, trainers). ● Nettles and brambles on paths to be cleared <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity for flora and fauna identification and observations of insects ● Displaying a positive approach to stinging insects rather than fear
<p><u>Medical emergency.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allergies ● Existing conditions ● injury 	Adults, pupils	Minor to death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FS Leader is trained for: Emergency First Aid in the Workplace and First Aid for Outdoor Incident Management ● Most Teachers and TA's have up to date basic first aid CPD ● Class Teachers to ensure that inhale

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			<p>are always with them in their class first aid box</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● FS leader to take a fully stocked first aid kit. ● Class Teacher/FS leader to be aware of any known allergies or existing conditions and be aware of treatment and prevention required. ● Pupils with severe medical needs are known to the teachers and FS leader. FS leader/trained teachers react and respond immediately should the need arise ● Minor injuries/accidents to be dealt with accordingly on site. ● Larger cuts/more serious injuries to be dealt with in school ● FS Leader and accompanying class teacher to take mobile phones with them for emergency contact ● In the event of severe injuries 999 to be called <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <p>Promote knowledge and independence identifying and avoiding allergens</p>
<u>Strangers on the grounds</u>	Adults, pupils	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Children to be made aware that should a person enter the woods (over the fence around the boundary) they must not interact with them ● In the case of this happening, staff will advise the person to leave the school grounds. If this is not observed immediately, staff will phone school to notify a member of SLT and children will be taken back to school straight away ● School office will be informed if this happens <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <p>Raise children's awareness of types of dangers and promote safe behaviours</p>
<u>Ingestion</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mushrooms and fungi ● Poisonous Plants ● Natural Paints 	Adults, pupils	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Site to be inspected prior to the session. ● Pupils are made aware that some plants are poisonous ● Pupils asked not to pick anything that's living and growing ● Promote the saying, 'Don't pick, don't lick.' ● Ensure children do not eat anything they find and keep their hands out of their mouths and eyes ● Wash hands thoroughly after the session ● Fungi to be identified to the children and shown areas where they are growing. Fungi should be left undisturbed rather than cleared if possible <p>RISK BENEFITS</p>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote knowledge and independence in identifying and avoiding mushrooms and fungi Identify similarities to foods bought and eaten. Understanding of the natural world and which plants must not be touched
<u>Using sticks/branches</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk of sharp objects. Sharp branches and thorns 	Adults, pupils	Minor to major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils to be aware of dangers and carry/hold sticks carefully being aware of others around them Minor injuries/accidents to be dealt with accordingly on site Larger cuts/more serious injuries to be dealt with in school In the event of severe injuries 999 to be called <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to work as a team safely, to problem solve and scaffold each other Pupils to be self-aware, identify dangers and scaffold peers Encourages self confidence in a new and sensory environment Opportunities to develop gross/fine motor skills and develop social skills
<u>Animal droppings</u>	Adults, pupils	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupils to be made aware not to touch or pick up any animal droppings Ideally, step over animal droppings Hands to be cleaned and anti bac gel to be used <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help children to identify animals from their droppings and other traits To understand the importance of hygiene
<u>Using string/rope</u>	Adults, pupils	Minor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children to be instructed how to use string/rope to make dens and tie sticks together with a variety of knots and lashings Close supervision where needed, to be assessed by FS leader and accompanying teachers/Adults <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practising knots and learning new skills involving following instructions Encourages creativity
<u>Small tools</u>	Adults, pupils	Minor to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety talk given and repeated, child

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scissors ● Potato peelers ● Palm drill 		major	<p>repeat safe use of tools instruction and features of the tool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pupils to be aware of dangers and carry/hold/use/store tools carefully being aware of others around them ● Close supervision for all tool use working with a FS trained adult for potato peelers and palm drill ● Glove used on non-tool hand <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pupils to be aware of dangers and carry/hold/use and store small tools carefully being aware of others around them ● Hand and eye coordination ● Sense of achievement for crafting items ● Problem solving, acquiring new skills and confidence building
<p><u>Larger tools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sheaf knife ● Secateurs ● Loppers ● Bow saw ● Bill hook ● Brace drill 	Adults, pupils	Minor to major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safety talk given and repeated, child to be able to repeat safe use of tools instruction and features of the tool ● Pupils to be aware of dangers and carry/hold/use/store tools carefully, as instructed, being aware of others around them. ● 1:1 supervision for all large tool use working with a FS trained ● Glove used on non-tool hand <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pupils to be aware of dangers and carry/hold/use and store small tools carefully being aware of others around them ● Hand and eye coordination ● Sense of achievement for crafting items ● Problem solving, acquiring new skills and confidence building ● Supporting communication, listening skills and understanding and application of new vocabulary. ● Risk taking and managing behaviour and frustration
<p><u>Rope Swing</u></p>	Adults, pupils	Minor to major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Swing erection/fastening to be regularly checked on site sweep ● Pupils instructed not to use the swing unless permission is granted by teachers under close supervision <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Encourages self-restraint

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Balance and coordination
Tree climbing.	pupils	Minor to major	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pupils instructed not to climb any trees unless permission is granted by teachers under close supervision ● Rules and safe boundaries to be established (Eg agreed height) before a child climbs any tree <p>RISK BENEFITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Balance and coordination ● Development of gross motor skills ● Decision making and self-control

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