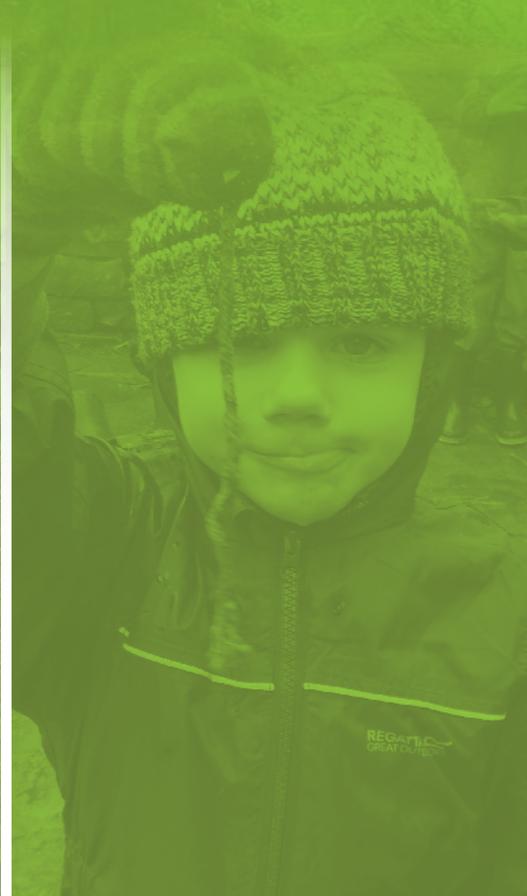


LARKHILL RISE FOREST SCHOOL



HANDBOOK



ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
PRIMARY SCHOOL



Emma Smith
Accredited to
Level 2
Forest Schools Award
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What is a Forest School?

Forest Schools originate from Denmark. It was found that pre-school children who attended Forest School sessions began school with strong communication and social skills and higher self esteem. These foundations helped raise their future academic achievements.

Our Forest School at Larkhill Rise will provide a positive and unique learning experience for our children. Children will have the opportunity to explore, enquire, problem solve and expand their vocabulary through working outdoors in a stimulating environment.

Ethos Statement

As adults looking back on our childhood, we often clearly remember activities such as exploring, tree climbing, making mud pies, dens and rose petal perfume. These are such enduring memories as they sparked our imagination and curiosity, provided challenge and purpose. They developed physical skill and provided ample opportunities to talk and share with our friends and resulted in a tremendous sense of achievement.

Unfortunately due to safety concerns, children today often miss out on these types of experiences. A Forest School provides a safe and supportive environment where children can take part in similar powerful learning.

At St Paul's we place a strong emphasis on personalised learning. Our Forest School will uphold this value as children will be encouraged to plan and initiate their own learning through aspects of the woodland environment that motivates and inspires them.

Adults will play a supportive role in valuing children's competences, capabilities, conversations and feelings. They will encourage children to think creatively, providing time for them to develop their thoughts and ideas. We aim to expand upon individuals' potential enabling them to become life long strong resilient learners.

A high ratio of adults to children helps us create the best learning experience for our children. All volunteers have undertaken a training session with the Forest School Leader and have received and read the volunteers handbook, outlining their roles and responsibilities.

Forest School Sessions

Activities for Forest School are numerous and diverse. We are always aiming to create independent, creative learners, who are inspired to try out their own ideas and interests. These are some of activities that may take place in a Forest School session:

- Den making
- Nature study
- Team games / collaborative play
- Creative experiences
- Imaginative play
- Physical activity
- Tool use *
- Fire use *



* see further guidance in the school policy

Forest School sessions will last for up to 2 hours and will take place in most weathers. Sessions will NOT take place in high winds, storms or icy conditions.

Clothing

There is no such thing as bad weather only bad clothing!

We recommend your child wears the following clothing:

Cold Weather



All Weather (Waterproof)



Warm Weather



Safety

Before each session the Forest School leader will carry out the risk assessments. These are then shared with all adults working in the Forest School and will be continually reviewed throughout the session. The Forest School leader will always have an emergency bag with them. This is called "Sid the Sack" and contains all the things we need to keep us safe at all times. The Forest School leader is qualified in outdoor first aid. "Sid the Sack" contains a first aid kit and any personal medication children may need. Parents must make sure that all medical information and contact numbers are up to date.



Entering the forest

The Forest School leader will unlock and lock the gate behind us. We will enter respectfully, understanding that we share our woods with plants and animals.

We have 3 main rules:

1. Respect yourself
2. Respect your friends
3. Respect the forest

Tree climbing

Only trees identified by risk assessment are suitable for climbing. Children must ask before climbing and an adult must be present. The ground below the tree will be checked for sharp objects and the branches checked for signs of loose or rotten branches. A maximum height of 1 ½ metres can be climbed. Adults must be near enough to catch a child if they should fall.



Carrying and transporting materials

Children are encouraged to roll, drag or pull using their hands or ropes. This is risk assessed. If lifting, children are instructed how to bend their knees and keep their backs straight. Children will be encouraged to work as a team.



Boundaries

At the beginning of each session children are told which area they will be using. All participants are taught a game "1,2,3 where are you?" They can use this call if they feel lost or if adults want to gather the group.



Digging and weeding

Children may carefully move soil to look for insects, plants and seeds. Children are encouraged to help maintain the planting areas by weeding, sowing and planting new plants. This activity will be done under the supervision of the Forest School Leader. Children are encouraged not to dig deep holes.



Eating

A nil-by-mouth policy is in place for anything found in the forest. Children are reminded not to put their fingers in their mouths or noses. When eating snacks brought into the forest or foods that are cooked on the fire by the Forest School Leader children will wash their hands using fresh water brought to the site and use an antibacterial hand gel before consuming. Fruit and vegetables grown in the Forest School will be harvested and cleaned thoroughly and may be cooked on the open fire by the Forest School Leader or in the kitchen back at school.

Rope and string use

Adults will help children in using string, modelling how to tie knots to join structures in den building type activities.

Picking up and collecting sticks

Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm's length to create pictures, structures and patterns. They are encouraged to think about how near they are to other people. Longer sticks can be dragged or carried with a person at each end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living trees and bushes.



Using tools

Tools can only be used under the guidance of the Forest School leader. All tools have a clear code of conduct for use and a separate risk assessment. Children are supervised 1:1 during the use of tools.



Picking up and playing with stones

Stones can be picked up and transported to make patterns and pictures or habitats. When placing stones children are encouraged to check what is underneath - is it safe to drop my stone here? Stones are not to be thrown.



Collecting wood for a fire

Wood is collected in 4 thicknesses which provide children with good mathematical activity.



Lighting a fire

Fires can only be lit by a Forest School leader. A separate risk assessment will be in place and all adults will be briefed. Fires can only be lit in the designated fire pit.



At the fire pit

Logs must be placed at least 1 ½ metres from the fire. No one can enter the fire circle unless invited to do so by an adult. Any movement is around the outside of the log circle. All fires must be fully extinguished before leaving the forest.



Caring for animals

Parents must sign to give permission for children to care for animals at Larkhill Rise. Staff must be notified of any allergies children may have to animals. Children will clean their hands with hand gel after contact with animals.



Mud slide

Children may only use the mud slide under adult supervision. Waterproof coveralls must be worn.



Leaving the site

All children will have used the toilet before leaving school. Children needing the toilet will be escorted to use the toilets at Bright Futures Nursery by a member of school staff. We leave the forest with no trace of us being there. Only artefacts that the forest leader has consented to can be taken back to school. The forest will be locked and secured by the Forest School leader on departure.