

Our Forest School Handbook for Staff and Volunteers



Badbury Park Primary

Introduction & Background

The Forest School Handbook contains information, policies and procedures relating to the running of Badbury Park Forest School sessions. It was developed by Louise Dance, Forest School Leader and Head of School for Badbury Park. The Handbook is made available to all staff, volunteers and parents prior to Forest School sessions taking place. The Handbook is subject to annual review and to immediate review if an incident indicates the need for this or if any significant changes are made that would require reassessment.

Designated Person for Forest School: Louise Dance (Qualified Forest School Leader)

Our Ethos

We believe at Badbury Park Primary School that every child should have regular, long-term access to a woodland or natural environment which provides them with inspirational and challenging outdoor learning opportunities. Forest School offers a learner centred approach, where children can learn through self-directed play and exploration. The children at our school will be given opportunities to develop their curiosity, confidence, self-esteem, creativity, empathy, communication skills, knowledge of the natural environment and ability to assess risk and to have fun.

Activities

Our activities will depend on the ability and experience of the children. All children will be given training by a qualified Forest School Leader prior to using tools. Examples of Forest School activities include:

- Woodland management and nature exploration
- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts
- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventure and seasonal celebration

Mission

Fun first

Opportunities for all

Respect

Environment

Safety

Teamwork



Rules

1. Look after one another
2. Listen to adults
3. Leave the forest area as we found it
4. Respect the creations of others
5. No picking, no licking
6. Keep within the boundaries
7. Carry sticks and planks safely



The Countryside Code

There are five sections of The Countryside Code dedicated to helping us learn how to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside.

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

Behaviour Policy (See School Policy)

We promote the idea that everyone including the staff, children and volunteers have a responsibility to protect their own and other group members' health, safety and well-being. They should inform the Forest School Leader if anybody's actions are likely to jeopardise the safety or comfort of others. It is our aim to promote:

- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness of personal abilities and limitations
- Respect and care for oneself, other people and the natural environment
- Co-operation and non-violent communication

Forest School Agreement and Ground Rules

At the start of each Forest School session an agreement will be sought between the staff and all the children for the conduct of the group. This will include items such as respecting oneself, each other and the environment and listening carefully to instructions when they are given. The group will be encouraged to contribute items to the agreement before it is 'sealed'.

Ground rules are firmer non-negotiable rules; these can be displayed in our Forest School area. If children break these rules they will be asked to leave the session and accompanied back to the main school to the Head of School.

Behaviour Expectations for Leaders, Assistants and Visitors

- Be a positive role model for participants, particularly with regards to respecting each person and the environment
- Encourage and reinforce caring and nurturing behaviour
- Be vigilant with regards to common sense safety
- Facilitate from an egalitarian and liberal approach, avoiding unnecessary rigidity or petty rules

Forest School Routines

Procedures to be carried out before each session:

- A thorough safety sweep to be carried out of the Forest School area before each session to check for any hazards
- At the same time boundary ropes, fences and gates and hedges should be checked to ensure that they are safe and secure
- Trees should be checked for any dead or broken branches which may fall
- Check that there are no dead twigs, etc., protruding at eye level from bushes/trees
- Check the weather conditions. If it is unduly windy or a thunder storm is imminent or has commenced, then it is not advisable to carry out a Forest School session

Session Plan

- Put on Forest School clothes and wellies
- Count children
- Delegate jobs – water carrying/equipment/snacks
- Collect mobile and Forest School Health and Safety Rucksack
- Inform office that session is taking place
- Complete safety sweep on the way – encouraging children to identify any potential hazards
- Get children to sit down at base camp (camp fire area)
- Sit down and discuss rules and any safety issues
- Listening activity
- Introduce activities – remind children that they will have free time
- Split children into groups as necessary
- Children choose activity
- Self/select snack/drink – ensure wet wipes for cleaning hands first
- Discuss session and allow children to choose to feedback
- Count children before exiting – return and change clothes

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

- Tidy everything away and label any creations that are to stay
- Ensure that the fire is completely extinguished
- Count all the tools back into the storage bags and boxes
- Count all the children and adults
- Collect any assessment sheets or observations from the adults

Health & Safety Policy

Forest School sessions may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for children. It is the general approach of Badbury Park Primary School to consider not only the risks of each activity but the potential benefits too. However, risks will be minimised by following appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk assessment covering key hazards that children may come into contact with during a session. **(See school Health & Safety policy and Forest School risk assessments).**

Legislation

Badbury Park Primary School fully accepts its legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The purpose of this act is to promote, stimulate and encourage high standards of health and safety at work. It protects not only all people at work, but also the health and safety of the general public who may be affected by the work activities. Please refer to our Health & Safety policy.

Staff & Training

We have a fully qualified Forest School Leader with relevant qualifications and experience and have undertaken current DBS checks. At least one member of staff will hold an up to date first aid qualification. We will also aim to provide adequate training and support to ensure all staff; volunteers are confident and competent when following the policies and procedures we have set out in this Handbook.

Reporting: Incidents and Accidents (See First Aid Policy)

Any accidents that involve injury will be recorded into a first aid book. Major injuries that constitute 'reportable injuries' will be reported to the Executive Headteacher via RIDDOR. Parents will be notified of injuries in keeping with the 'Emergency and Major Incidents' policy. 'Incidents', which include major behavioural incidents and any major negative occurrence that is not an accident, will also be recorded by the Forest School Leader in an Incident Report.

Hazardous Plants & Fungi

Part of the risk assessment will be to identify any particularly hazardous plants and point them out to the group so that all members are aware of the dangers. The sap or hairs from some plants can cause rashes and blistering when in contact with skin, or after the skin is then exposed to sunlight. Most rashes are caused by stinging nettles, though giant hogweed may also be a problem. Both of these plants are easily distinguishable and if either is seen growing on site all members of the group will be taught how to distinguish and avoid coming into contact with it.

Giant Hogweed - Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is a close relative of cow parsley originally from Southern Russia and Georgia. It can reach over 3m (10ft) in height. Although this striking plant can be attractive in certain situations, most gardeners will want to eradicate it, as it is potentially invasive and the sap can cause severe skin burns. It is widely distributed in the wild and poses a serious risk to people who are unaware of its potential for harm (RHS, 2016)

Serious poisoning from ingestion of leaves, berries or mushrooms rarely occurs, even when curious children are involved. However, ingesting even small amounts of some species can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps; and large amounts are potentially fatal. Consequently, we disallow all children from foraging and eating anything that has not been agreed safe by a Forest School leader. If a member of the group is exposed to a hazardous plant or fungi, so that they have a reaction the FS leader must be informed and appropriate First Aid given. If the nature of the reaction is more serious the Emergency & Serious Incident Procedure must be followed.

The hazardous plants in our Forest School area are:

Name	Part of plant	Side-Effects
Oak Tree	Foliage/Acorns	Affects kidneys gradually. Symptoms appear after several weeks. Takes large amount for poisoning.
Daffodil	Bulbs	Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. Maybe fatal.
Ivy	Leaves	Affects breathing, causes convulsions, vomiting and coma
Hazel Tree	Hazel nuts	Harmful to those that suffers from a nut allergy. Can cause anaphylactic shock – Fatal.
Elder Tree	Berries/flowers	Harmful if eaten raw, Cause severe sickness.



Hawthorn Tree Picture Identification

Leaves are 6cm & have tooth lobes. Hawthorn flowers: Deep red fruit – ‘haws’.

A bunch or hawthorn berries/haws. Hawthorn buds: Bark is brown/grey & knotted.

Our Forest Passport Promise:

The Badbury Park Forest School passport promise....We promise you will get the opportunity to.....

- To spend time in nature
- To create natural art
- Build a den
- Splash in a puddle
- Roll down a hill
- Light a fire
- Cook on a fire
- Identify trees
- Develop knowledge of local wildlife, trees and flowers
- Create natural structures
- Look after an animal
- Go on a scavenger hunt
- Explore the local area
- Tie a knot
- Create a mobile and a sticky crown
- Go on a ‘Bear Hunt’
- Create a fairy house
- Use tools safely
- Whittle a wand
- Create jewellery
- Make an animal home
- Hunt for animal tracks
- Run with birds of prey
- Climb a tree
- Play games in the wild
- Sing around a campfire
- Create forest music
- Forest bathe



These activities will be carefully planned to ignite imaginations, ensure well-being and build resilience and perseverance for lifelong learning.