



Thorn Grove Primary



Forest School Handbook

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EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Thorn Grove Primary School
 School telephone number: 0161 4851177
 Postcode: SK8 7LD
 Ordnance survey grid reference:
SJ873850
 Latitude: 53.362023
 Longitude: -2.1910214

Nearest hospital: Stepping Hill Hospital, Poplar Grove,
 Stockport SK2 7JE

FOREST SCHOOL ETHOS

‘Life is a journey, with problems to solve and lessons to learn but most importantly experiences to enjoy’

We provide our children with unique experiences, which foster a love of life, a passion for living, and memories that will stretch for a life time.

At Thorn Grove Primary School, our forest school child led approach aims to establish long-lasting positive perceptions of the outdoor environment whilst developing confidence, good self-esteem, social and emotional resilience and effective communication skills.

Through Forest School we will aim to:

promote a positive growth mindset by offering opportunities to explore the outdoors using curiosity and imagination

provide worthwhile, significant opportunities to problem solve, overcome challenges and handle risk

inspire a love of nature, impact on well-being and develop a strong sense of belonging to a little corner of the world

create an appreciation of the outdoor environment and it’s wealth of learning opportunities

FOREST SCHOOL RULES

Boundaries

Children are always made aware of how far they can explore before a session begins. If children explore hidden areas, an adult should also go into the cover, deep enough to be able to see the children. If an adult loses sight of them, shout “1, 2, 3, where are you?” The child should reply “1, 2, 3, I’m here”. This will be repeatedly used so children are familiar with the rules.

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 a straight back will be modelled by all adults. Heavier objects can be rolled, dragged or carried by more people.

Digging

Children love digging and this is fine in the designated area in our school grounds. At Thorn Grove, however, making holes randomly in the ground is to be discouraged. Supervising adults will show children how to look carefully for insects and their habitats using fingers or lolly sticks if reluctant to touch.

Toileting

Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before the beginning of a session. This will avoid too many disruptions to the session and avoid children having to take off all the waterproofs again! During toilet breaks, activities requiring the use of tools will be suspended if the ratio of children to adults on task is compromised.

Eating and drinking

Children will be prevented from eating anything found in the grounds, such as berries or seeds. They will be reminded about putting fingers and hands in mouths and noses. If drinks or snacks taken outside, children will be asked to use wipes or hand sanitizer gel to clean their hands before eating their snack or drinking from a milk carton/bottle.

Around the fire circle

There will be no running within 5 metres of the fire area and anything being carried must be placed on the ground behind the seating area. All the adults and children will step over the logs to sit down. The children will be reminded that walking within the fire circle is not permitted. Children must walk around the outside of the seated fire circle area at all times.

Lighting a fire

The Forest School (FS) leader will take control of the operation of lighting a fire and all accompanying adults will be briefed of the protocol before the activity commences. (See fire lighting risk assessment)

Leaving the site

The school grounds at Thorn Grove must always be left as they were found. If artefacts are made using 'found' materials these may be taken off site. Shelters should normally be demolished and imported materials taken back to school at the end of each session. Occasionally some large items may be left tidily for the next group.

SESSION PROCEDURES

Procedures to be carried out before session:

A thorough sweep of the site will be done before each session to check for any litter, glass etc. Any such items should be collected using plastic bags and disposable gloves.

A written record will be kept if hazards were found and how they were dealt with. This will be located in the Forest School file in the Nursery classroom.

Check that trees, bushes and other foliage is safe, including falling branches, thorns, hazardous berries or fruits.

Check the weather conditions. If it is unduly windy or a thunderstorm is imminent or has commenced then the Forest School session will be cancelled.

Register will be taken and retained.

Equipment will be checked before each use.

Session Plan:

Ongoing risk assessment and headcount

Dressing for Forest School, clothes, wellies etc. and toileting

Walk to area discussing things to be seen on the way

Sit down around the fire circle, reminder of rules and safety

Re-cap on previous weeks activities and discuss new activities

Select snacks remembering to clean hands using water and soap before eating

Free play/Group games/Story telling

Discussion of session and feedback allowing children to choose to feedback

Return to setting to remove clothing

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

Headcount

Gather and tidy away resources

Ensure the fire is completely extinguished (if applicable)

Clean any tools used/check them and store securely

Walk back to the setting and change

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

In addition to tools suited to any planned activities, the Forest School leader will always be responsible for the 'Essential equipment' box. The contents of the box may vary depending on the time of year, weather conditions and the planned activities for the day's session. Some equipment will remain in the essential equipment box as standard, according to the generic risk assessments and daily risk assessment:

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: General

- First Aid Kit with emergency fire blanket and bucket of water
- Emergency Procedures card along with location details and grid reference
- Medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children)
- Risk Assessments
- Communication Device (school mobile)
- Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for the individual to carry the medication for themselves it should be clearly labelled so that staff are able to administer it.
- Appropriate Clothing
- Sharps box and gloves

Other Possible Equipment:

- Wet wipes, hand gel
- Trowel
- Sun cream (parental permission required)
- Spare Clothing
- Thermos of hot water
- Chocolate/sugary food
- Knife
- Emergency shelter

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: Clothing

No person will be permitted to attend a Forest School session without appropriate sized clothing that will protect them from extremes of heat or cold and keep them covered to reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes.

Children and parents are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session.

Clothing list:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat, with a hood.
- Long sleeved top
- Wellie boots
- Warm Socks, and a spare pair
- Gloves and Woolly hat – Cold weather
- Sun hat: that fits well to ensure good visibility – sunny weather

We work on the principle that **“there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”**.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: First Aid Kit

- Latex Gloves
- Bandages
- Plasters
- Burns gel
- Burn dressing
- Dressings
- Cotton wool
- Antiseptic wipes
- Medication for individual child
- Cling film

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: When having a fire

- First Aid and Burns kit
- Flame retardant Gauntlet gloves
- Fire Blanket
- Bucket of water
- Fire steel
- Cotton wool

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff members involved in the forest school programme are mindful that it is an exploratory experience for the group. They allow the group to play and learn as independently as possible, often without demonstrating or suggesting. If invited to provide support then they will do, but otherwise they will merely observe, allowing the experience to be learner-directed.

FOREST SCHOOL LEADER

It is the role of the Forest school leader to take a lead in planning, delivering and evaluating the forest school programme. They also take primary responsibility in ensuring that policies and procedures, rules and guidelines are adhered to. Volunteers and other adults may help with these responsibilities where they are able and/or qualified to.

ASSISTANTS AND VOLUNTEERS

All adults present at the Forest School must sign a form to confirm that they have read, understood and agree to comply with the Thorn Grove Forest School Handbook before the start of the programme or session they will take part in. Assistants and volunteers will be informed of the plan for each session in advance and invited to provide input. They will be asked to provide feedback on how each session went verbally or written, as preferred.

MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Thorn Grove Primary School</u> School telephone number: 0161 4851177 Postcode: SK8 7LD Ordnance survey grid reference: SJ873850 Latitude: 53.362023 Longitude: -2.1910214 Nearest hospital: Stepping Hill Hospital, Poplar Grove, Stockport SK2 7JE</p>
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EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Emergencies are never wanted, but they are a possibility, and so we ensure that all adults present at Forest School are familiar with appropriate emergency procedures. Most emergencies can be resolved on-the-spot by the leader removing the group from potential threat and providing first aid. However, in the event of a serious incident, which could arise as a result of an injury, illness or threat, emergency services should be contacted and the following procedures followed:

IN CASE OF MEDICAL EMERGENCY

1. **Secure safety of whole group** from further danger. Stop all work/activities if safe to do so. Call in and locate group promptly as agreed with group in advance. If possible, remove whole group from any further danger or threat of danger.
2. **First Aider to attend to any casualties** with adult helper and with regard for maintenance of required supervision ratios for the rest of the party. At least one first aider must be on site at all times.
3. **Emergency services contacted as necessary**, ideally by an adult helper. Charged school mobile phone is carried by staff. Despatch a designated adult to meet emergency vehicle at the entrance where possible/necessary. Give following Ordnance Survey grid references to 999 operator:

SJ873850

Latitude: 53.362023

Longitude: -2.1910214

4. **Safety of the rest of group** will be maintained by the remaining staff and adults away from the scene of the incident.
5. **Informing next of kin** should be carried out as soon as practicable after the incident by a member of staff in line with the school Health and Safety policy.
6. **Report/log incident** following school reporting procedures. RIDDOR incident report will be made for a serious near-miss incident. Headteacher and SLT staff must be informed of any major incident as soon as possible.
7. **Review Risk Assessments**

MISSING CHILD POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Forest School programme will be led on the school grounds with which children are familiar however all adults will be made aware of the following:

- Boundaries will be chosen, clearly marked and made known to the group. Going outside the boundaries will require all of the group to go or a sub group, with at least one leader – allowing at least two leaders to stay with remainder of group.
- The group will be counted in and checked at start and end of the session, then at other relevant points that include members splitting up.
- Good communication within the group will encourage collective responsibility for each other's safety – leaders are always approachable and should be made aware if there are any concerns as to a participants whereabouts.

If anybody suspects a person may be missing, they should immediately alert the Forest School leader.

1. Activities will be stopped; the group will be brought together and a head count will be completed. The Forest School Leader will appoint staff/volunteers to look after the group.
2. The perimeters of the Forest School site will be searched and then the inner areas by the Forest School leader and an assisting adult.
3. If after 5 minutes, the child has not been found, the Forest School Leader will alert the school office. Additional assistance will arrive to support the search. The group will be lead back to school by supporting staff/volunteers.
4. If the child has been missing for more than 20 minutes the emergency services will be notified. A search party will be organised and instructions from the police will be followed.
5. The incident will be reported following school procedures.

FIRE PROCEDURE

Fires are an important part of Forest School and other sessions, however these will not be used during every session. The Forest School leader will ensure that all people participating in sessions with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Fires will only be used where it is appropriate to do so.

- Leader will explain to participants the importance of using only dead wood for fires and also of the importance of dead wood as a habitat.
- Smoke inhalation will be reduced by burning dead wood.
- Fires will only be lit in the designated fire circle space.
- Participants will only be allowed to light fires under direct supervision from a trained leader using suitable materials and equipment.
- All participants will be given clear guidelines about how to behave and move around the area when the fire is lit.
- A lit fire will be supervised by an adult at all times, as will all cooking activities.
- Related safety equipment, including heat-proof gloves, a fire blanket, a burns kit and water will be kept within close range of fires.
- All fires should be fully extinguished and all traces removed at the end of a session.

SERIOUS INJURY TO FOREST SCHOOL LEADER

- Assistant to secure the area and make safe
- Assistant to administer first aid
- Assistant/other adult to contact emergency services if necessary and give location
- Assistant to use other adult to return children to class. Alternatively use school mobile for adult assistance to escort children

- Report incident (inform next of kin)
- Review Risk assessments

INJURY TO ADULT (ASSISTANT, PARENT, VISITOR)

- Secure the area and make safe
- FS leader to administer first aid and remain and monitor casualty
- FS leader/other adult to contact emergency services and give location
- Other adult to return children to class. Alternatively use school mobile for adult assistance to escort children calmly
- FS leader waits and monitors casualty until emergency services arrive
- Report incident (inform next of kin)
- Review Risk assessments

RIDDOR reporting procedure

In the event of a dangerous occurrence requiring hospital treatment, a RIDDOR record will be created. An Incident Report will be generated for any serious near-miss incident at or in the vicinity of the Forest School site.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

The Forest School programme may include activities that are considered higher risk than usual for participants. However, the FS leader will seek to minimise risk by following appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk assessments covering key hazards that participants may come into contact with during a session. Examples of risk assessments are referenced in this handbook and must be shared appropriately. All health and safety guidance is adhered to in relation to our School Health and Safety policy. This may be viewed separately on request.

LEGISLATION

Thorn Grove 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.

RISK MANAGEMENT

The Forest School Leader will take overall responsibility to ensure the safety of all children and adults involved. Risks will be carefully managed by adhering and following risk assessments carried out in advance of activities.

The risk assessment process is as follows:

- Look for the hazards
- Decide who might be harmed and how this might happen
- Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done
- Record findings
- Review assessments and revise them if necessary

Risk Assessments

All adults involved in Forest school activities will ensure they have read the relevant risk assessments linked to activities they participate in. Adults will be encouraged to offer feedback to review and amend practises if needed.

The following risk assessments have currently been put in place and can be found in the handbook Appendix A. Additional risk assessments will be made available to staff and volunteers on a needs based plan.

- Site risk assessment
- Mini-beast hunting assessment
- Tool use risk assessment
- Environmental Art
- Fire Lighting and Cooking on fire Risk assessment
- Den Building Risk Assessment
- Running and Hiding Games Risk Assessment

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Acknowledgement of responsibility

At Thorn Grove Primary School we take very seriously our responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of the students in our care. At our school we follow the policies and procedures generated by Stockport Safeguarding Children Board. Our safeguarding policy can be found on our school website <http://www.thorngroveprimary.co.uk/policies/>

Key staff

In our school the designated safeguarding lead is:

Susan Denford (Headteacher)

In her absence the role is fulfilled by:

Mr Wilson (Deputy Headteacher)

Adult: Child Ratio

The following minimum adult ratios will ensure appropriate support and supervision of vulnerable groups at all times:

- **Foundation Stage:** 1 adult: 4 children
- **Key Stage 1:** 1 adult: 6 children
- **Key Stage 2:** 1 adult: 8 children

These ratios are for guidance only for groups of children and suitable levels of support should be determined in advance depending on the types of activity and needs of the group.

TOOL USE POLICY

Thorn Grove Primary school is committed to providing children with access to a wide range of equipment that stimulates enjoyment, learning and development in the outdoors.

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leaders and staff. The Forest School leaders will inspect the tools before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect. Whilst using hand tools the staff to child ratio is increased.

This will be achieved by following these guidelines:

- Staff to child ratios will be 1:1.
- Tools will be kept in a tool box and only removed by the Forest School leaders, staff or volunteers.
- Adult and child sized gloves will be available and are to be used when appropriate.
- Knives must be stored in a locked tool box and removed by an adult only. Knives will be kept in a sheath and worn around the neck by an adult if not being used.
- Running with tools is prohibited.
- Pointing with tools is prohibited.
- Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.
- Bill hooks should not be swung or used with gloved hands, and will only be used under the guidance of Forest School leaders.
- Bow Saws must have a blade guard on them when not in use. Blade guards to be removed and put back by Forest School staff or volunteers
- Adults and children must be given instruction and demonstration on the appropriate and safe position with which to saw.
- If using peelers and knives to whittle, children will remain seated, and whittle away from the body.
- All tools must be counted back into the tool box at the end of the session

- Tools will be used in a designated tool use area, clearly marked using tape/logs.
- Tools will be checked, maintained and safely stored by the FS leader using the appropriate cleaning tools.

FIRE SAFETY POLICY

Thorn Grove Primary School understands the importance of vigilance to fire safety hazards. All staff, volunteers and children are aware of the fire safety procedures set out in this policy.

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. Thorn Grove aims to ensure that all children participating in Forest School sessions with fires with fires will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

Location

- The campfire area will be enclosed by logs to prevent the spread of fire.
- The Kelly kettle will only be used on flat ground and any woodchip or leaf litter must be brushed away before use.

Positioning of children and adults

- Fire area is surrounded by logs at least 1.5 metres from the fire pit. The logs represent the campfire boundary.
- Once lit an adult will remain by the fire at all times.
- When the campfire is in use, children are not permitted to access the area without permission.
- Seating on logs will be organised around the outside of the fire boundary. Once seated around the campfire, the children must remain seated until directed by an adult to move.
- When approaching the adults and children must assume a safe kneeling position.
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn and long hair must be tied back.
- Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire. With 1:1 adult help children may carefully place fuel for the fire on the edge of the fire. We will ensure the ratio of children to adults is at least 1:4 outside the fire boundary area.
- There will be clear exits from the fire circle with no seating obstructing the area

Cooking

If food is to be cooked at Forest School, the Forest School leaders are responsible for ensuring that the food has been transported, cooked and stored in a 'safe to eat' manner.

Safety and Responsibility

- Fire is lit in presence of Forest School leader using agreed method.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.

- No plastics are to be burnt.
- If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with 1:1 adult supervision using a protective fire gauntlet.
- Sticks/Wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of the session.
- Water will always be to hand during camp fire sessions.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- Remaining ash will be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled. It will be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition and reduce the nutrient concentration in one area.
- A fire blanket and first aid kit will be placed within reach of the fire pit during campfire use

INCLUSION STATEMENT

In Forest School sessions all persons should be treated equally.

We aim to and are committed to:

- providing a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued;
- including and value the contribution of all children and adults to our understanding of equality and diversity;
- make inclusion a thread which runs through all of the activities of Forest School.

FOREST SCHOOL LEADER INFORMATION

Name of Forest School Leader:

Miss S Freebairn

Qualifications:

Level 3 Certificate in Forest School

ITC certificate in Outdoor First Aid Training