

**Grange View C.E. First School**

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***We aim to SPARKLE!***

**Our Christian Vision is that- Everyone sparkles.**

Grange view welcomes everyone to flourish and thrive. We are lifelong learners that strive to achieve our God given potential.

*So don't hide your light! Let it shine brightly before others.*

**Matthew 5:16** The Passion Translation of the bible

**Our Ethos**

The children are living a Christian life where they aim to sparkle, thinking about our core Christian Values; Love, Friendship, Trust, Forgiveness, Respect and Wisdom

## Our Aims

- To provide a stimulating and secure environment, inclusive of children from all faiths and cultures.
- To provide an engaging, meaningful and relevant curriculum that equips all learners with the necessary skills for their educational journey.
- To value all individuals and support them to reach full potential and create an atmosphere of equal opportunity where expectations are high.
- To grow caring citizens who value the world we live in and celebrate moments of awe and wonder.
- To offer opportunities for collective reflections and inspire spiritual development that shape daily lives.
- To help the children to form values which will allow them to make moral choices throughout their lives, not just during their school years.
- To work in partnership between home, school, church and the wider community.

# Grange View C.E First School

## Forest School Policy

### **1. Introduction: What is Forest School?**

The philosophy and roots of Forest School can be traced back to a number of sources as far back as the 19th Century. This includes the ideas from educationalists such as Rousseau and Froebel, the woodcraft movements, the native Americans and the Quakers.

The Forest School concept originates in Denmark, originally aimed at pre-school children, where it was found that children who had attended forest school then arrived at school with strong social and communication skills, having the ability to work in groups effectively, generally had high self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities. These foundations helped them to raise their academic achievements.

Forest School can now be delivered alongside conventional education methods to provide children with the ability to transfer their skills they learn into everyday life.

The focus is on reconnecting (or in some cases 'connecting') children with their local outdoor environment, giving them the space and freedom to discover, play, explore and learn within a natural, outdoor setting.

Forest School has and is now being used with children of all ages; both mainstream and with children with specific emotional and behavioural needs, with amazing results. Children that are known not to concentrate well in class are coming to Forest School and excelling in practical, hands-on tasks which engage them. Improved social skills, greater peer interaction, stronger relationships and better problem solving abilities are all benefits attributed to Forest School attendees.

No child can fail at Forest School; they all manage to take something positive from the experience.

Forest School is holistic learning through play and exploration. Children learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and to use their own initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others.

Forest School sessions at Grange View C.E. First School provides increasingly diverse opportunities for children to benefit from a supportive curriculum that can help them build positive values and attitudes about themselves, about learning and the environment in which they live. Children are invited to participate in challenging and achievable tasks that build their confidence, skills and independence. They are given the time to thoroughly explore their thoughts, feelings and relationships. This time and reflective practice develops inter- and intra-personal skills, which are well-documented as being directly linked to learning skills.

## **2. The Forest School Ethos and Aims**

Forest School is a unique educational experience and process that offers children the opportunity to succeed and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment.

Children engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in almost all weathers, with the appropriate footwear and clothing. Children will work with tools, play, learn and begin to understand the boundaries of behaviour, both physical and social. They will grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world.

### **Forest School Aims:**

- To provide an opportunity for individuals to develop, to learn and to enjoy themselves.
- To provide a safe and non-threatening environment in which children can take risks, make choices and initiate their own learning.
- To help children understand, appreciate and care for the natural environment.

- To provide ways of developing practical life skills in an outdoor environment.
  - To develop self-esteem, confidence and a positive disposition to learning through the completion of small, achievable tasks.
  - To meet the needs of children with all learning styles
  - To develop social and team working skills
  - To enable children to be independent, self-motivated and considerate.
  - To be true to the Forest School ethos and approach
  - To develop a secure, happy and welcoming environment.
  - To provide stimulation and varied learning activities appropriate to the child's needs and stages of development.
- To help each child build self-esteem, confidence, independence and self-control and interpersonal skills.

### 3. What happens at Forest School

Typically, small groups of individuals (depending on child/adult ratio) take part in weekly sessions lasting for about an hour. The sessions involve practical hands-on activities which aim to build up participants' skills, abilities and confidence week by week.

All sessions are designed and led by our trained staff, with the help and direction of our Forest School practitioner. However, Forest School strongly encourages participant-led learning, so as the weeks progress, learners are given more freedom and responsibility to explore their interests and therefore initiate and direct their own learning.

Forest School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation. Activities can include:

- Shelter building
- Natural art
- Using knots and lashings
- Fire lighting
- Animal tracking
- Bug hunts

- Tree investigations
- Climbing and balancing
- Woodwork using tools, e.g. making musical instruments, jewelry, decorative items
- Creating bug homes and bird feeders
- Collecting, identifying and sorting natural materials such as leaves
- Team games

Most activities are curriculum-linked and span a number of subjects, including Math's, English, Design & Technology, Science, Music and Art. Forest school sits wonderfully in the topic based skills curriculum that we have at Coppice.

#### 4. The benefits of Forest School

Forest School is suited to all ages and abilities. The aim of Forest School is to develop the person as a whole. It is particularly suited to people who have a low sense of self-worth and who struggle for various reasons to learn in a traditional classroom setting.

Completing small achievable tasks, coupled with genuine praise from Leaders, helps to boost confidence and self-esteem.

For children at school, attitudes to learning are improved as they find that learning can be fun and enjoyable. This new positive outlook is then transferred to the classroom where they are found to be more motivated and able to concentrate better.

Forest School can also:

- Develop physical abilities and help participants to stay active and healthy.
- Heighten self-awareness and improve emotional and social skills.
- Promote co-operative and group working.
- Encourage participants to take care of themselves and others.
- Foster care, appreciation and respect for wildlife and wild places.
- Broaden knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

#### 5. The Forest School site

Our Forest School takes place in a small woodland area on our lower school field, behind the pirate ship. It is made up of mixed deciduous trees, mainly mature Oak, Hawthorne and Beech. Around the fence area there are a mixture of climbing plants such as ivy.

The woodland is managed carefully at the moment and as our Forest School progresses we hope to allow the site to go a little wilder and develop a deeper diversity.

The site is within school grounds and is not accessible to the public but the perimeters need to be carefully monitored as the site seems to be a magnet for local youths to break into.



Children taking part in Forest School will also be encouraged to minimise their impact on the site. This will include:

- Finding out about the different animals and plants that live in and amongst the trees
  - Learning to respect animals' homes
  - Careful observation of live animals
  - Leaving lying deadwood in place
  - Taking all materials and litter with them when they leave
- Ensuring that the site is left like they found it

## 6. Use of the site by community groups:

All community groups accessing our forest area will need to adhere to the following procedures:

- Timetabled slot for use of the site to ensure curriculum sessions are not operating at the same time
- Read and familiarise themselves with our forest school policy, Friends of Grange View PTA policy and relevant forest school risk assessments.
- They will need to provide a copy of their risk assessments prior to attendance, which will be checked and stored by the school management.

## 7. Forest School Criteria for Good Practice and Code of conduct

### Forest School Good Practice:

- *Entering and leaving the Forest School site*

We will enter and leave the Forest School site using the path around the side of the school building. We will then enter and leave the outdoor area by the field gate. On entering the outdoor area we will use the paths to ensure that we preserve the site.

Forest School operates a 'Leave No Trace' policy and therefore on departure all belongings and rubbish will be collected or disposed of back in the main building

Any shelters will be demolished and taken with us. Any objects made with natural resources can be taken off site.

- *Collecting materials*

We do not pick anything living in the Forest School site. We only collect natural materials such as leaves, sticks and flowers. Berries and mushrooms must never be collected. There is a nil by mouth rule on our site except food given by the Forest School leader.

The children will be told 'No Picking and No Licking!' whilst in Forest School.

- *Boundaries*

There is a clear boundary fence around the woodland. Children are taught that when they hear a whistle they stop and return to the fire circle. This must be practised many times.

- *Fire use*

### **Lighting a fire (see fire safety policy)**

A fire must only be lit on the designated fire area agreed by Forest School leader with the Head teacher. The Forest School leader will take the lead and be in charge of the fire and is the only adult that can lead a session where a fire is used. All adults will be briefed on fire rules and safety as will the children before each session. A fire will only be lit when there is a purpose to lighting it e.g. cooking, keeping warm, heating water etc. (See fire safety policy for how to set up a fire safely).

Fire can be used with the whole class or a small group. The fire safety policy must be adhered to at all times. Fire safety equipment must be stored and easily accessed from the Forest School room every session even if there is no fire. Children will be taught fire circle rules through a game to begin with and reminded at each session.

- *Tool Use*

The Forest School Leader is the only adult that can lead a session where tools are used, however the designated assistant is able to use tools with a small group of children under the supervision of the Forest School leader.

The Forest School assistant will be trained on tool safety and use before working alongside children. The tool safety policy must be adhered to at all times. Children will be reminded that they do not use tools unless an adult is with them.

- *Climbing Trees*

Climbing a tree improves children's gross motor skills and therefore has many benefits. Tree climbing is allowed under strict supervision. We will engage children in joint risk assessment before climbing a tree. An adult must check the tree with the child, looking for dead or unsafe branches and remove any where necessary. The adult and child ensure ground below is clear of anything sharp that could cause additional injury to child if they fell.

Children only climb to where the adult can reach them and no higher.

- *Picking Up and Playing With Sticks*

Children can pick up and carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but must make sure they 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 pulled from living trees. Sticks must not be thrown.

- *Rope and String Use*

Children should be encouraged to use rope and string as a way of connecting and transporting materials. They must not tie themselves or anyone else up. If a child wants to build e.g. a rope string then an adult can model appropriate knot tying.

- *Picking Up and Playing with Stones*

Picking up and using stones is permitted however children must be taught not to throw stones at anyone else and the reasons for this.

- *Digging, Carrying and Transporting Materials*

Children must be encouraged to roll, lift, drag, pull and push as these movements develop their gross motor skills. Adults should model safe lifting such as straight back, bent knees. Heavy objects can be carried by more people. Digging is permitted on site.

- *Eating and drinking*

We have a nil by mouth policy on the site. Children must be made aware of the dangers of berries, fungi and other things that could make them poorly. Children are to be reminded not to put fingers and hands in their mouths. For drinks and snacks to be consumed children must wash their hands using the sink inside the toilet and use antibacterial gel before doing so.

## **Forest School Code of Conduct for adults.**

*All staff assisting with Forest School and helpers must read the guidelines below.*

Any persons assisting with Forest School sessions must:

- Follow guidelines, policies and procedures in the handbook and within school to keep children safe.
- Respect that the Forest School leader has overall leadership responsibility regarding teaching and learning within Forest School sessions.
- Dress in the appropriate clothing stated in the policy.
- Not use tools on their own accord for any reason.
- Not take a child to the toilet by themselves, they must ensure the Forest School leader is informed to consider health and safety of all children.
- Have read the children's medical information but keep children's medical information confidential
- Have read the risk assessments appropriate for the session they are attending.
- Not light a fire on their own accord for any reason.
- Not to initiate risky play; climbing, tool play and fire use without consulting the Forest School leader.



- Make the Forest School leader aware of any hazards, dangerous objects or trees that they come across whilst at Forest School.
- Support the Forest School leader in promoting the ethos and aims for Forest School as well as the Code of Conduct.

### **Forest School Code of Conduct for pupils**

*All children attending Forest School must follow to the guidelines below, agreed by the school council.*

Any children attending Forest School sessions must:

- **Always listen to the leader and follow their instructions**
- **Work collaboratively and well as a team – don't be silly!**
- **Do not wander off and move around the site sensibly**
- **Dress appropriately with willies, waterproof trousers and a coat in winter and arms covered in the summer.**
- **Only use tools and equipment when given permission.**

## **8. The Forest School Day**

### **INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS**

Forest School is a unique educational programme run by trained Leaders. It helps children and young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in the outdoor natural environment.

Forest School provides:

- A safe, supportive and positive environment for learning and discovery.
- Session plans and risk assessments for all activities.
- Activities that link to the National Curriculum and the skills based curriculum and cater for different learning styles.
- High adult to child ratios, enabling individual one-to-one and small group work.
- Monitoring and reporting of individual children's progress and development.
- Greater involvement of parents in their children's education through the invitation to take part in a Forest School session with their children.

## Responsibilities:

Clothing: It is our responsibility to ensure that children are appropriately dressed for Forest School sessions. Any child not wearing appropriate clothing will not be able to participate.

We will provide a shelter from the elements (a Tepee) plus full waterproof clothing (including wellington boots if necessary), but it is still important that pupils wear clothes that are warm and that are OK to get wet and muddy. These are: warm trousers; a long-sleeved jumper, fleece or t-shirt; a vest or t-shirt underneath; thick socks - thermal if possible or two pairs of thinner ones.

Discipline: It is our responsibility to discipline and manage participating pupils. It is good practice for the same member of staff to attend each of the sessions, to maintain continuity for the children.

Safety and First Aid: The Forest School Leader (Marguerita Gray) is a qualified first aider and carries a recommended first aid kit. Activities are thoroughly risk assessed and staff continuously monitors the safety of the group as activities progress. An emergency plan has been drawn up, which will be followed in the unlikely event of an accident.

Cancellation: Forest School sessions usually take place outdoors whatever the weather. However, sessions may need to be moved to a more sheltered site within the school grounds if there are high winds. A possibility for this is our planned second site within the classroom.

## 9. Using and Storing Tools

All tools are counted out and back in at the beginning and end of each session in which they are used. When not in use in the Forest they are kept secured away in a locked area. Before each tool is to be used it will be checked for damage and working order.

Each tool type is kept in their own suitable containers, many of which are also lockable. Children must never be allowed to help themselves and will always have adult supervision when collecting, transporting and using tools.

Tools are only used for a specific purpose. All adults should model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation at all times. When using a tool, they are used well away from others in the group, (two arm's length and the tool length) and ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use. Only walking is permitted when transporting a tool.

## 10. *Daily Session Routine*

- Children registered ensure children have come to school in correct clothing.
- Gather group of children in cloakroom area. Put on waterproofs if needed. Get ready for departure; gather any necessary medication and equipment.
- Count children and stand them in a line, inform all adults of number of children present.
- Brief safety talk to children about walking to FS (Stop at each gate, mind fingers in

locks etc.)

- Walk to Forest School taking up opportunities for discussion along the way
- Arrive at woodland, walk to fire circle. Safety talk around circle, remind about call back, introduce any experiences for the session/ anything else of importance that children need to know.
- Play warm up game
- Child-led exploration and teacher initiated tasks
- Forest School leader to extinguish fire, pack everything away, check all tools against list, count them and lock them away.

Walk back to main building and get changed if necessary.

## 11. Campfire procedure

Coppice school Forest School provides opportunities for children to get closer to nature and the outdoors through a variety of activities, which include learning about fire safety and how to make fires through the use of Kelly kettles. Children may also get the opportunity to light their own fires on wooden blocks or in small metal containers. This will only take place under strict supervision, with a one to one adult to child ratio.

All Forest School Leaders are skilled and practiced in fire-building and management. Kelly kettles and small fires only will be used and lit in the centre of the Forest School circle.

All Forest School activities are rigorously risk assessed. Sessions are planned in such a way as to introduce higher risk activities to children over a period of time. This allows Leaders to get to know the children in the group and for the children to learn how to behave responsibly and to build knowledge and understanding of the activities

### Boundary setting

In the first Forest School session, both physical and behavioural boundaries are agreed with the children. At each subsequent session, these boundaries are revisited and reinforced.

### Developing routines - Sessions 1 and 2

- When they arrive at the Forest School site, children are shown how to sit round the Forest School circle (step over sit mats/tree stumps and sit down).

- The need for, and principles of, fire safety are explained. This will include the rule that when kelly kettles or a fire are being used in the centre of the circle, only one child at a time is permitted to approach the kelly kettle or fire, on instruction from the Forest School Leader.
  - The children are shown how to move around the circle (step out of circle and walk around outside).
  - For young children (Foundation and KS1), a game is then played to reinforce this - Leaders call out different statements that will relate to certain children in the group. E.g. "Everyone who has brown hair step outside and move around the circle" and so on.
- In subsequent sessions, children will be asked to recall how they should behave at the Forest School circle. Depending on the behaviour and ability of the group, the use of kelly kettles and/or lit fires will usually be introduced in much later sessions.

### Engendering responsibility

Through practicing these established routines, the children at Forest School will be able to enforce/remind others how to behave. Peers expect responsible behaviour and to a degree will be self-policing.

### Forest School Leaders' daily campfire and use of kelly kettle and camp fire procedures

To ensure that everyone stays safe on site and that risk is managed effectively; Forest School Leaders will follow a daily campfire and kelly kettle procedure.

Forest School Leaders will:

- Keep igniters in a safe location.
- Ensure there is a supply of water/soil/sand to douse the fire.
- Always carry a fire blanket.
- Ascertain the location and size of the fire to be built and plan accordingly including fuel stocks.
- Carry out a pre-visit site check and risk assess the site and the activity.
- Be prepared to abandon the activity in the event of unforeseen circumstances rendering the activity unsafe and have another activity on standby.
- Alert the fire brigade in advance if necessary to avoid false alarm and misidentification of Forest School fires as being uncontrolled.
- Douse fires at completion and check them after 30 minutes to ensure that they have not spread.
- When lighting fires, Forest School Leaders will:

- Not wear loose clothing and tie long hair back, and ensure that children have their hair tied back and also have no loose clothing.
- Wear gloves.
- Allow only one child at a time to help with fire construction / approach the fire.
- Try to keep away from the smoke.
- Put out the fire with water when finished.

When using kelly kettles, Forest School Leaders will:

- Only light a fire in the tray of the kelly kettle in the centre of the Forest School circle.
- Kneel on one knee for ease of moving backwards.
- Never place the kettle on the fire without containing water.
- Only fill the kettle with water when cool.
- Place the tray of the kettle on a flat surface.
- Remove the cork before putting the kettle on the fire.
- Keep the spout on the opposite side to themselves and others.
- Remove the kettle from fire when the water starts to boil.

Remove the kettle from the fire with the handle held vertically, using the chain to support it in an upright position.

## 12. Inclusion and Equality

At Grange View C.E. First School we are committed to providing equal opportunities for all and this includes Forest School.

- We aim to value each child unconditionally, to enhance each child's self-esteem and to promote independence.
- We aim to offer equal opportunities to promote positive attitudes to differing cultural and ability backgrounds.
- We try to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect.
- We want to make sure that our school is a safe, secure and stimulating place for everyone.
- We recognise that people have different needs, and we understand that treating people equally does not always involve treating them all exactly the same.
- We recognise that for some children extra support is needed to help them to achieve and be successful.
- We try to make sure that people from different groups are consulted and involved in our decisions, for example through talking to pupils and parents/carers, and through our School Council.
- We aim to make sure that no-one experiences harassment, less favourable treatment or discrimination because of their age; any disability they may have;



their ethnicity, colour or national origin; their gender; their gender identity or reassignment; their marital or civil partnership status; being pregnant or having recently had a baby; their religion or beliefs; their sexual identity and orientation.

- We welcome our general duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, to advance

**In addition to the school's equality policy we have set out some guidelines to ensure all children:**

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are listened to and valued. Appreciate and value the difference they see in others.
- Take responsibility for their own actions.
- 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 enable them to succeed.
- Participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

**We will do our utmost to ensure every child can fully participate in all forest school activities however occasionally an activity may be deemed unsafe for a particular child to take part in due to illness, injury or disability.**

### **13. Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School**

Everyone at Grange View C.E. First School has a responsibility in relation to child protection. We are committed to:

- taking all reasonable measures to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child and young person (pupil) in our care
- the practice of safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children and young people
- protecting each pupil from any form of abuse, whether from an adult or another pupil

#### **Our aims:**

- to raise awareness of individual responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse

- to provide a systematic means of monitoring, recording and reporting of concerns and cases
  - to provide guidance on recognising and dealing with suspected child abuse
  - to provide a framework for inter-agency communication and effective liaison
  - to ensure that any deficiencies or weaknesses in child protection arrangements are remedied without delay
  - to ensure that safe recruitment procedures are operated
  - to design and operate procedures which promote this policy and which, so far as possible, ensure that teachers and others who are innocent are not prejudiced by false allegations
  - to contribute to the operation of appropriate health and safety procedures
  - to have regard to and be consistent with relevant statutory and regulatory requirements and guidance.
  - In addition, adults working within Forest School need to appreciate that when children feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they may be moved to disclose information which they might have otherwise kept to themselves. Any volunteer, or member of staff, who finds that a child is telling them something that concerns them should follow the course of action set out below in simple steps:
    - Listen to the pupil but ask NO leading questions. Allow the child to lead the discussion but do not press for details.
    - Keep calm and offer reassurance. Accept what the child says without challenge.
    - Make NO promises. You cannot 'keep a secret'. You should make it understood that there are limits to confidentiality at the start of the disclosure.
    - Inform the DSL
- Keep an accurate, written record of the conversation, including the date, the time, the place the conversation occurred in and the essence of what was said and done by whom and in whose presence. Keep the record secure and hand it to the DSL.