



Forest School Handbook

**Respect
Ourselves**



**Respect
Others**



**Respect
Our Environment**

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Review Date: May 2025

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What is Forest School?

The Forest School Association describes Forest School as 'an inspirational learning process that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting'.

Forest School is defined by six core principles that create its unique style of learning.

Core principles of forest school- *from Forest School Association*

The Long Term Principle- Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observation and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

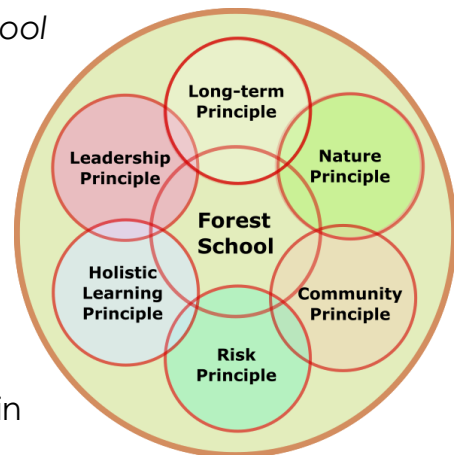
The Nature Principle- Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

The Risk Principle- Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

The Holistic Learning Principle- Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

The Leadership Principle- Forest School is run by qualified practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

The Community Principle- Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.



What to expect

At Ludgershall Castle Forest School, we want to create a relaxed atmosphere that promotes observation and exploration of the natural world around us. We will allow children the freedom to roam outside in a child led environment, encouraging them to believe in their own capabilities, use their initiative to solve problems and build confidence in facing challenges. Forest School provides a nurturing environment that enables children to build self-belief, resilience and develop positive social interactions through cooperation with others. Children will have the opportunity to discover the wonders of nature through the changing seasons and develop new practical skills.

Our aim is for all students to take part in an hour of Forest School once a fortnight. This will take place within our designated Forest School area within the school grounds or local woodland, alongside a qualified Forest School leader and member of support staff.

Some of the activities might include:

- Bug hunting
- Shelter building
- Woodcraft
- Using tools
- Fire lighting
- Campfire cooking
- Pond dipping
- Exploring wildlife
- Gardening & planting
- Team games
- Storytelling
- Nature art
- Knots and string work
- Free play



Forest School area

We have a designated Forest School area located within the school grounds (known as Bramble Bottom) which includes an outdoor shelter, designated fire circle, wildlife areas and mud kitchen. We have a selection of more established trees to allow for swings, hammocks and den building, as well as many apple and cherry trees. This area is fenced off from the rest of the playground to ensure safety when lighting fires and to create a boundary during free play. We are also fortunate enough to be able to explore the school ponds, located in a separate fenced off area of the school and will have use of other field and playground areas for team games and running.



Code of conduct

At Forest School all staff will follow the school's code of conduct and behaviour policy. In addition to the school policies, Forest School will focus on the core value of respect.

Respect Ourselves- Forest School supports an environment of choice and freedom to explore own ideas. Staff and children are encouraged to respect themselves in order to be mindful of their own behaviours, words and actions. This also applies to following appropriate safety measures during activities to ensure their own safety.

Respect Others- We want Forest School to be a safe space and we therefore ask everyone to show respect to one another. This also includes protecting the safety of everyone and co-operating with others.

Respect our environment- Forest School is based in a natural environment, all staff and children are expected to respect their surroundings and minimise disturbance to wildlife.

Rewards & Sanctions

At Forest School we aim to build children's self-esteem and confidence, through own sense of achievement. Promoting the resilience of individuals by encouraging perseverance and acknowledging the processes children are using. We aim to provide a non-judgemental environment that limits the use of external praise and sanctions.

At Ludgershall Castle Forest School, sessions will not be used as either a reward or sanction, as it is seen as a core part of the child's school learning. If a child's behaviour becomes unsafe to themselves or others, then de-escalation methods will be used to prevent a situation escalating further. There will be a designated quiet area that children can take themselves to at any point, only if necessary will a child be removed from the forest school area. The child will be given recovery time and the incident will be discussed with them once calm, with possible resolutions. Behaviour is dealt with in the Forest School setting as much as possible and no further sanctions carried out. Class teachers will be informed for information only. If there is repeated unsafe behaviour, this will be discussed with the head teacher to establish the next course of action.

Toileting

Children will be encouraged to use the toilets before a session starts. They may go to the toilets by using the KS1 door at any point if they need to, just as they do during outside PE lessons and break times.

Collecting Wood

Wood may be collected for fire lighting from around the site. We look for three different sizes of wood referred to as 1 (fine), 2 (pencil thickness) & 3 (finger width). We try to use freshly fallen wood to protect creature habitats. Logs may be purchased from other sources by the leader.

Children transporting sticks or branches longer than arm length should drag them behind them and teamwork is encouraged.

Collecting natural materials

Natural materials may be collected for art, sculpture and woodland craft. Children are encouraged to look for the materials themselves but leaders will supervise to check that nothing harmful is gathered. Children are not allowed to eat anything gathered on foraging trips without adult supervision.

Digging

When investigating the environment, children may carefully move logs or stones to look for insects, taking care not to harm the creatures or destroy their habitat. They can dig under the soil using their fingers or small sticks but they should only dig with tools in designated areas.

Using tools

Children will be given 'Tool Talks' before using any tools, covering how to use the tool safely and any safety equipment, like gloves or goggles that must be used. All tool use will be under strict adult supervision, counted in and out and stored securely.

Tree climbing

Climbing trees is a good opportunity for children to learn to manage their own risks. They will be shown how to climb safely, checking the ground below for sharp objects, looking for a safe path of ascent and descent and how to assess if a tree is suitable for climbing. Children are permitted to reach their own limits to a maximum of 2 metres. Adults will supervise tree climbing activities and the Forest School leader will assess the trees to check for rotten or broken branches.

String, ropes and knots

Children will learn a useful selection of knots for different uses. Adults will supervise activities where ropes are tied to trees for tarps or shelters and cord used will be bold visible colours. Any swings will be set up by the forest school leader using static climbing rope with a minimum breaking load of 22 kN, ensuring that any fall distance does not exceed 2m when swung.

Eating, drinking and food hygiene

Children will be encouraged to bring their water bottles with them, particularly in hot weather. An anti-bacterial hand wash bowl, wipes or sanitiser gel will be provided for hand washing before eating or drinking any snacks during Forest School. This will include food the children have cooked on the fire. Food allergies will be noted as part of the risk assessment for the cooking activities, using the information provided by parents on school file. Any meat items (such as hot dogs) will be precooked and any items in need of chilling will be stored in the fridge in school until required and stored within sealed tubs when outside.

Leaving the site

At the end of each session all personal belongings must be taken away, any craft created can be taken home, and the site must be left clean and tidy to protect the wildlife.

[Ludgershall Castle Staff Code of Conduct Policy](#)

[Ludgershall Castle Behaviour Policy](#)

Equipment

The Forest School leader will organise the equipment and tools needed for each session. They will also prepare an Emergency Bag to be present at all sessions. For offsite sessions the contents for each bag may vary depending on the group, activity, time of year and weather conditions. The Forest School leader is responsible for ensuring kit is checked and restocked as required.

The Forest School leader's essential kit in emergency bag:

- First aid kit
- Emergency procedures list
- Emergency mobile phone or radio system
- Emergency whistle
- Drinking water
- Anti-bacterial gel

Additional kit may include:

- Daily risk assessment checks
- Wet wipes
- Tissues
- Leader's rigger gloves
- Minibeast viewer
- Paracord

- Wildlife charts
- Flask of hot water

Tools will be stored away securely until used and only distributed and used under supervision of the Forest School leader. Tools will only be used for particular purposes appropriate to the age and level of skill of the child. All tools and activities are fully risk assessed. Knives will be kept in a locked box and must be signed in and out by users.

Prior to using any tools, the leader will provide a 'tool talk' covering what the tool is used for, how to use the tool safely, what personal protective equipment (PPE) to use, the parts of the tools, how to carry/put down safely.

Tools that may be used include:

- Peeler
- Knife
- Bow saw
- Hammer
- Palm Drill
- Mallet
- Secateurs

Health & Safety

In Forest school children will learn to respect risks through play to enable them to navigate risks and hazards throughout their life. They will learn how far they can go before they feel unsafe, understand their limits and will gain the confidence to say "no thank you" when they feel uncomfortable in situations.

The site and all activities are risk assessed to minimise danger, daily checks are carried out on the area and to equipment before each session. All staff and helpers are required to read the Forest School Handbook and follow policies and procedures in place.

[Ludgershall Castle Health and Safety Policy](#)

First Aid

Our Forest School Lead has completed Paediatric First Aid training and holds an additional Outdoor First Aid certificate. Most of our support staff have also completed first aid training. As part of the Forest School leaders kit, they always carry a first aid kit and summary of emergency procedures (see equipment for further information). In the event of an accident or injury, the school's accident book (located within the First Aid room) will be completed

by the first aider and a slip sent home with the child. In the event of a head bump or injury of concern, parents will be contacted via private Clasdojo message or phonecall.

Fire Safety

Following the schools Fire and Evacuation policy, in the event of fire staff and children will evacuate the Forest School area via one of the two gates and meet at the school's assembly point on the top playground.



Fire safety talks will take place before any fire lighting sessions, where children will learn about the fire triangle and how to respect a fire.

Long hair will need to be tied back and any loose tassels on clothing tucked away.

Children will be taught the respect position (kneeling on one knee) to enable a stable position that they can move backwards from easily.

The fire circle is designed with an entrance and exit point, there is to be no walking or running inside the fire circle even if there is no fire lit. Logs and stools mark out our circle and are placed 2 meters from the fire to sit on. If anyone wants to move around the circle or change places, they must step out of the circle and walk around the outside. Children may be invited to approach the fire pit for cooking or fire lighting but only under adult supervision. A lit fire is never let unattended and fires are fully doused to extinguish after use.

Fire lighting will only take place with a full and complete fire safety kit, which includes: Lidded fire bucket with clean water, fire blanket, fire gloves and first aid kit (complete with burns dressings). Our Forest School Lead is also a designated fire warden at the school.

Safeguarding

Ludgershall Castle Forest School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. In line with the school policy and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023), all staff and volunteers within the Forest school are subject to appropriate checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service. All staff and volunteers are required to read the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and understand that any concerns or disclosures are to be discussed with our

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)- Liz Warren or one of our Deputy DSL's- Taljinder Linforth/Andy Bridewell.

[Ludgershall Castle Safeguarding Policy](#)

Equality and Inclusion

At Ludgershall Castle Forest School, we aim to create a dynamic and flexible learning environment, which is safe, healthy and caring, where everybody is happy and equally valued. We aim to develop personal integrity and honesty along with empathy and consideration for others. In line with our school's equal opportunities policy, our Forest School leader and assistants have a duty of care to ensure that every child in the school has equal opportunities to take part in a full range of forest school activities.

[Ludgershall Castle Equality and Inclusion Policy](#)

Communication

Our Forest leader will carry either an emergency mobile phone or radio system as part of their emergency kit bag to maintain communication with the school office or emergency services in the event of an incident.

Staff will communicate to parents via Clasdojo for reminders of Forest School sessions, updates etc. Parentmail may be used for consents and email notifications and our Newsletters will contain any important updates. When necessary parents may be contacted by phone or privately message on Clasdojo.

If you would like to talk to our Forest School Lead regarding any concerns or suggestions, then please leave a message with the school office or communicate with Mrs Heafey via Clasdojo.

Photo Consent

Photos may be taken during sessions to use on the school website or to share with parents via Clasdojo. Photo consents will be checked against the school system unless additional consent is sought via Parentmail.

Site Maintenance

Our Forest School area is maintained by Mrs Heafey and students are involved in planting and pruning as part learning to care for the environment during sessions. We also have support from volunteers and welcome parent support, please contact Mrs Heafey if you are interested in assisting with site maintenance or volunteering during sessions. Additionally, the school trees are surveyed every 18months by professionals.

Insurance

Our Forest School is covered by our school's insurance policy with Wiltshire Council. The insurer is AXA XL Insurance Company Ltd and Aviva Insurance Ltd, policy number: P23CASLFG00153.

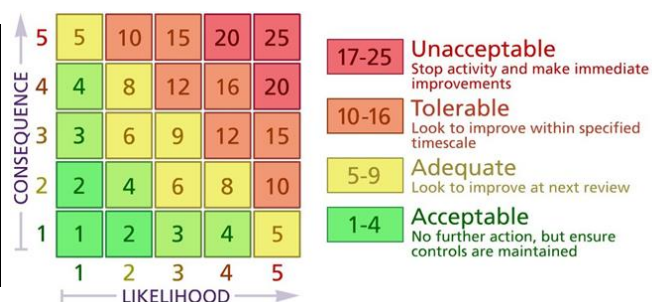
Complaints

Any concerns or complaints can be discussed with Mrs Heafey (Forest School Lead) or Mr Bridewell (Headteacher) or by following our school's complaints procedure.

[Ludgershall Castle Complaints Procedure](#)

Site risk assessment

LIKLIHOOD	SEVERITY/CONSEQUENCE
1 Very Unlikely	No harm or illness
2 Possible	First Aid Injury
3 50/50 chance	Over 3 day injury
4 Very Likely	Major injury/ illness
5 Almost Certain	Fatality



WHAT IS THE HAZARD?	WHO MIGHT BE HARMED?	HOW MIGHT THEY BE HARMED?	EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES	RISK RATING		
				L	C	R
Uneven ground- Slips trips and falls	Anyone	Generally minor injury, as would likely fall onto grass	Clear main pathways, running games to take place on playground/field, first aid kit present and appropriate footwear to be worn.	2	2	4

Tree Branches- Falling branches or Low protruding branches	Anyone	Falling branches could fall onto heads, protruding branches could cause puncture wounds if ran into.	Daily checks to check for loose branches hanging in trees (avoid being under tree areas in high wind), trim protruding branches that are high risk.	2	2	4
Plants & wild food consumption- poisoning	Anyone	Poisoning from ingestion or skin reaction from touching	Daily checks and identification of new plants. Children advised not to eat anything unless advised by leader. Hand washing after sessions, excessively poisonous plants removed.	2	2	4
Cold Weather- Including storms, high winds of extreme cold	Anyone	Hypothermia or danger from objects being blown	Weather checks done daily, coats worn during cold weather but if weather is deemed unsafe, sessions will be moved inside.	1	3	3
Hot weather- Sunburn, dehydration, heatstroke	Staff and pupils	Sunburn, dehydration, heatstroke	Weather checks done daily, water bottles to be taken out and sun hats. Request parents apply sun cream before school, find areas of shade to take plenty of hydration breaks in.	2	2	4
Pond area- Falling into water.	Staff and pupils	Falling in, drowning, ingestion of water	Pond area fenced off with a locked gate, only enter under adult supervision, water is not deep and children are advised of safety. Hands washed after touching anything around the pond or water.	1	5	5
Animal faeces- contamination through exposure	Staff and pupils	From touching animal faeces and having contaminated hands, can contain parasites, bacteria and viruses.	Daily checks to remove any visible faeces (most likely from cats), Anti-bacterial sanitiser used if contact is suspected. Children advised to report any that they find.	1	4	4
Plant stings- Thorns and nettles	Anyone	Possible stings, cuts or spikes.	Main areas cleared of brambles and stinging nettles. Children taught to identify such plants so they are able to avoid them/not touch them. Encourage legs to be covered for sessions.	2	2	4
Hazardous litter- Sharp waste, medical syringes etc. (particularly possible along public footpath fence)	Anyone	Cuts, transmittance of bacteria/disease	Daily checks of the area, litter removed using litter picker and disposed of safely (sharps box on site if needed)	1	4	4

Insects- Possible bites, ticks	Anyone	Minor bites/stings or ticks (Lyme disease)	Legs should be covered. Stools and logs used for sitting on. Parents advised to check for ticks at the end of the day and watch for symptoms (bullseye rash). If a tick is noticed on a child during the session, parents will be notified.	1	2	2
Trees- dead/diseased/damaged. Risk of trees falling.	Anyone	Bruising/crush or impact injury	Leader to inspect trees for signs of disease such as ash dieback, leaf blotching, lesions or branches dying back (to monitor and report concerns to premises officer). These trees not to be used for shelters/swings and avoided in high winds. All trees surveyed every 18 months	1	4	4
Unauthorised Access- Trespass/public walkway down one side of forest school site	Staff and pupils	Violence, aggression, safeguarding	Outside fence/gate in good condition and to remain locked. Visitors from the school must sign in via reception and if not DBS cleared will be accompanied by a member of staff. Staff remain vigilant on site and move pupils away from fence if necessary.	1	2	2

Risk Benefit Assessment

Risk assessment of some of the main activities that may take place within Forest School with a summary of how pupils will benefit.

ACTIVITY	HOW WILL PUPILS BENEFIT FROM THIS ACTIVITY?	POSSIBLE HAZARDS	WHO IS AT RISK?	PRECAUTIONS IN PLACE TO REDUCE THE RISK OF INJURY	NEW RISK RATING		
					L	C	R
Fire Lighting/campfire cooking	Learning how to safely light and respect fires, learning new practical skills and social interaction with others, promotes independence and responsibility.	Burns, scolds, fire losing control	Staff and pupils	Safety talks, pupils sat 2m away from fire unless invited closer, moving around the outside of fire circle. Fire bucket, fire blanket, burns kit, fire gloves always present when fire lighting.	2	2	4
Den/shelter Building	Co-operation with others, problem solving and practical skills. Encourages ideas and creative thinking.	Falling sticks/branches, knocks and bumps from transportation of sticks, trips from ropes/pegs	Staff and pupils	All ropes are brightly coloured to help visibility. Sticks and branches to be dragged to transport, staff supervision and first aid kit available.	2	2	4

Tool use	Learning to safely use tools, new practical skills, sense of responsibility, build muscle strength in hands and allow for sense of achievement	Cuts, abrasions, puncture wounds, bruising	Staff and pupils	Tool talks (safety talks before use), appropriate use of PPE (rigger gloves) on non-tool hand, tools counted in and out and regularly checked. Close adult supervision, tools appropriate for child's ability, first aid kit available.	2	2	4
Pond dipping	Learning about life cycles, wildlife and creatures. Exploring different habitats	Slipping, falling in water, drowning	Staff and pupils	Close adult supervision, limit number of children next to water. Pond area fenced off and locked when not in use, banks of the water are shallow.	1	2	2
Tree swings/hammock	Learning to tie knots, sense of adventure, aids emotional regulation	Falling, bumps/bruises	Staff and pupils	Swings put up and checked by leader, maximum height at any point of swinging 2m, only used with static climbing rope with a minimum of 22kn capacity, rope checked and inspected for grit and damage before use, adult supervision.	2	2	4
Tree Climbing	Learning to manage risks, problem solving, confidence building, muscle strength	Falling, bumps/bruises	Staff and pupils	Initial tree checks on stability/health of the tree and ensure area underneath is free or stumps/sharp sticks. 3 points of contact on the tree at all times and climb to maximum height of 2m/height that supervising adult can reach.	2	2	4

Accident/Incident Forms

In the event of an accident or incident the following form is completed manually (located within the first aid room). A copy is given to any parties involved and school holds a record for 5 years in line with our schools policy.

ACCIDENT / INCIDENT / ILLNESS REPORT SLIP		Pupil's Name		Date
				Time
				Class
Location and details of accident / incident / illness				
Head Injury		Sprains / Twists		Parent / Carer Contacted
Asthma		Nosebleed		Unable to contact Parent
Bump / Bruise		Stomach Pains / Upset Tummy		Well enough to remain in school after First Aid
Cut / Graze		Mouth Injury / Tooth Ache / Loose or Missing Tooth		IMPORTANT Please consult your doctor or local hospital if your child suffers any drowsiness, vomiting, impaired vision or excessive pain after returning home.
Headache / High Temperature		TLC Applied		
Vomiting / Nausea		Collected from school		
Authorised Signature				
Details of Treatment and Additional Comments				