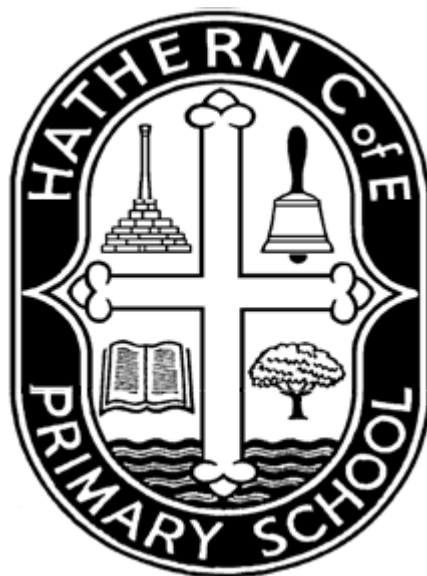


Hathern Church of England
Primary School



Forest School Handbook
October 2016

At Hathern Church of England Primary School, we believe in
'Learning and Caring Together'

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The Handbook is made available to parents wishing to work with us prior to the activity taking place or any parent wishing to read it. It is also to be read by all staff, volunteers and freelancers working for or with our Forest School Leaders prior to participation. The Handbook is subject to annual review and to immediate review if an incident indicates the need for this.

1. Ethos

Our ethos for Forest School is based on the principles from the Forest School Association:

“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, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School. 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. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.”

In addition to these statements we feel it important to add the following statements which run alongside the agreed above principles and as such are mutually supportive.

Forest School is an organic, natural process which supports participants in holistic learning. It is participant led with a range of tasks carried out safely, such as tool use and fire, to ensure that participants develop self-confidence and self-esteem. Forest School creates a community of participants who respect, support, assist and discuss learning with each other. It supports participants in developing their emotional intelligence, worldly awareness and respect. Forest School is safe place where participants can share thoughts, feelings and ideas in an area where they are know they will be treated with respect and the accreditation they deserve.

<http://www.forestschoolassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

2. Rationale

Environment

Hathern has a large natural area which children use at dinner times, for PE and for planned experiences outside of the classroom. It has been the belief from the head teacher that this area could be utilised further to develop the ethos as stated above and provide this opportunity for children to be a part of. Recently the Teaching Assistants in Foundation have been trained to Level 1 and the Foundation Teacher has a previously qualified as Level 3.

Cohort

Fourteen of the current cohort of children attended New Pastures Playgroup, at which the children mainly learn outside in their outdoor space. As a result these children enjoy learning outside and the outdoor classroom is a highly popular part of our environment. It seemed the time therefore to add Forest School to our timetable and offer this opportunity to the Foundation cohort.

3. Structure of Sessions

Children will come to school in appropriate clothing and register and self-register as normal. They will then all go to the toilet and put on their waterproofs and wellies. Children will be

encourage to discuss the day they have experienced so far and sing the Forest School song. Children will then be reminded of the safety aspects which are highlighted on the risk assessment before entering the Forest School environment. Children will then find Sage the woodland elf who will give us a task for the session. The task maybe a team building game, a physical activity or a craft activity. The children will then meet back at the benches for a review of the task. Children will then be able to explore the environment being able to approach challenge and risk as they see fit. We will meet back for snack, a game and a themed story. The children will then be able to explore again before then tidying up, reviewing what we have done today and being back in time for dinner at 11:45.

4. Equal Opportunities

All children in Foundation will attend all sessions unless of absence. Foundation Staff will ensure that there is an extra supply of weather appropriate clothing so that all children will be able to attend the session feeling comfortable. On the risk assessment appropriate provision is made for those with Special Educational Needs and 1-1 support will be given when and where needed to ensure independence can be developed alongside Forest School aims. Due to the open, organic nature of Forest School challenge and risk, success and failure are an intrinsic part of the process meaning that all learners can develop in their own learning styles, enhance their strengths and develop their weaknesses in a safe and nurturing environment. Forest School is therefore appropriate for all of our learners no what stage of their development.

5. Environmental Impact Statement

Description of Forest School Setting

Name of Site: Hathern Primary Cof E School Field	Location: Bottom of the school grounds	Grid Reference: SK505223
Owner: Hathern Church of England Primary School		
Other identified stakeholders:		
General description/landscape context/topography: The field is a large area of grass with a locked area containing the nature garden. Along the back is an established hedgerow and ditch, followed by a newly planted hedgerow in front of it. There is a fence on the right and left hand sides.		
Woodland description		
Flora	Trees: Mature oak, horse chestnut, pine trees, hazel, willow Plants: Nettles, grass, daisy, dandelion, bramble, broad leaved dock Fungi: <i>Coprinellus micaceous</i> Mosses:	
Fauna	Birds: robin, blackbird Mammals: squirrel Insects: Long legged harvestman spider, worm, slug, snail, woodlouse, large white butterfly	
Abiotic elements: Water – there is no running water nearby but the area can become waterlogged after heavy rain. There is a ditch running around the back edge of field which becomes waterlogged. There is a pond of considerable depth behind the locked gates.		

Soil – the soil is dense, rich and with a lot of worms, whilst digging deeper rubbish was found such as bricks and glass.
Archaeological considerations: there are houses running along the end of the site.
Management history of site: Fence around the pond, benches through the locked gates, the grass is cut regularly.
Long term vision: to turn into an area which has a wild flower meadow, bug hotels, a pond, a climbing area, containers, mud kitchen area, tree house, woodland area and surrounded by hedgerows.

Activity vs Impact Grid

LT – long term MT – medium term ST – short term T – temporary P - Permanent

Area Impacted On						
Activity	Ground layer	Field layer	Shrub layer	Canopy layer	Path way	Stores of materials
Hide and Seek	erosion of grass and soil – ST T	erosion of small plants - SH T	destruction of species - LT P	N/A	erosion of the path - LT P	N/A
Climbing trees	erosion of grass and soil – ST T	N/A	N/A	Damage to trees - ST	erosion of the path - LT P	N/A
Scavenger hunts	erosion of grass and soil – ST T	erosion of small plants - ST T	destruction of species - LT P	N/A	erosion of the path - LT P	Resource depletion – ST P
Shelter building	Digging beneath the layers of the grass – ST T	erosion of small plants - ST T	destruction of species - LT P	Damage to the trees LT – P	erosion of the path - LT P	Resource depletion – ST P
Team games	erosion of grass and soil – ST T	erosion of small plants - ST T	destruction of species - LT P	N/A	erosion of the path - LT P	N/A
Fire lighting	erosion of grass and soil in the fire circle – ST T	destruction of species - LT P	destruction of species - LT P	Potential for overhanging branches to be in path of fire. - LT P	erosion of the path - LT P	Resource depletion – ST P
Planting	digging in the soil layers – LT P Adding more species + LT P	Increased species + LT T Increased wildlife + LT T less space and light – LT T	Increased species + LT T Increased habitats + LT T	Less space – LT T More competition for water and nutrients – LT T	erosion of the path - LT P	N/A
bird boxes	erosion of grass and soil – ST T Increased species + LT P	Increased species + LT P	N/A	damage to trees - ST T Increased wildlife +	erosion of the path - LT P	N/A

6. Risk Assessments

See risk assessments attached.

Safety management points to be followed during each session.

Scenario	Management of Risk
Tree climbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children will be made aware of the dangers • Children will be appropriately dressed • 1:1 ratio with adult • height boundary of child's shoulder
Collecting games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children involved in the identification process of harmful species • Instant attention can be gained by the 123 and the whistle • Children aware of safe place – base camp • Children will be appropriately dressed
Hide and Seek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children involved in the identification process of harmful species • Instant attention can be gained by the 123 and the whistle • Children aware of safe place – base camp • Children will be appropriately dressed • Children need to see adult if they are hiding
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanitizer provided and used • All cups and equipment washed prior to use and after use • All food cooked by a Forest School Leader and checked to be edible
Walking to site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register and regular head counts • Children carry something manageable • Children will be appropriately dressed
Balancing games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children encouraged to say when support is needed • depending on height ratios may be revised • Children will be appropriately dressed
Strangers into the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet at base camp • Forest School Leader to approach if appropriate • Children aware of call to camp 123 and whistle • Stranger danger talks with children

7. Fire

Hathern Church of England Primary School Forest School Siting and Lighting of Fires Policy

Campfires and the use of Kelly kettles are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. The Forest school programme at Hathern C of E Primary School aims to ensure that all

children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires and/or Kelly kettles will do so safely, with as little risk to their health as possible and in a way which does not cause environmental damage and is properly extinguished.

Organisation

- Children and other adults will be confident at entering the log circle safely through the routines put in place: Children and other adults enter by stepping over a log with

one foot, lifting the other foot over and sitting on their bottoms, to leave the circle they stand, turn around and place one foot over the log and then the other. No movement is allowed inside the circle.

- The fire or Kelly kettle will always be lit in the inner circle which is a safe distance (2 metres) from the seats.
- The materials for the fire will be collected prior to the session with additional materials being collected by the participants during the session.
- The fire will be lit by a qualified Forest School Leader and they will stay with the fire until it is safely extinguished.

Location

- The campfire or Kelly Kettle will only be lit in the fire pit which is raised off the ground.
- The fire pit will be placed in the centre of the circle (please see attached fire circle map)
- The Forest School Leader will take wind direction, over hanging materials, the bedrock and soil types and the health and safety of the group into consideration when planning a fire.

Positioning of Children and Adults

- Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs at least 2 metres from the fire pit.
- When the campfire is in use, children and other adults are not permitted to the inner circle access the area without permission and only 4 at a time.
- If permission has been given to enter the inner circle children and other adults must kneel on one knee to ensure stability and to allow ease of movement backwards.
- Once seated around the campfire, the children and other adults must remain seated until directed by a Forest School Leader to move.
- Children and other adults will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping backwards over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.
- Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.
- Children and other adults are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
- Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children and other adults: they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them)
- If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.
- If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible.
- The Forest School Leader will ensure water and fire gloves are close at hand.

Type of Fire

Training is provided for leaders regarding the best fire lay to use for a session:

- Criss-cross fires are used to provide a large amount of heat and light and are fast burning.
- Long Log fires are good for cooking as they are slow burning and require little fuel.

Safety and Responsibility

- The Forest School Leader will be the only person permitted to light and manage the fire.
- Fires are lit using a fire steel.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
- No plastics are to be burnt.
- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.
- A burns kit will be in the Happy bag.
- Children and other adults who have inhalers for asthma will have them available in the Happy bag.
- All procedures on the emergency action are adhered to.

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished by the end of a session.
- Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
- In an emergency the fire will be doused with water and the remains spread out then doused with more water.
- Extinguishing will be done under the Forest School Leaders supervision, 1 participant at a time will sprinkle some water on to the fire then the Forest School Leader shall place a cup of water over to extinguish the flames. The logs will then be spread out to cool.
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
- The Forest School Leader should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Kelly kettles

- The Kelly kettle must be placed on flat, clear ground within the inner circle of the fire circle.
- Children and other adults must be seated at least 2 metres away from the Kelly kettle sitting on the logs.
- The Kelly kettle must not be overfilled.
- The children and other adults must follow the rules for the fire circle (see above).
- The cork must be out of the Kelly kettle before lighting the fire.
- The spout must be on the opposite side to the Forest School Leader.
- The air hole for the fire must be on the opposite side of the spout.
- The Forest School Leader is responsible for lighting the fire in the base and maintaining the fire in the base.
- Fire gloves will be used to pour the water.
- Fuel should burn itself out, but if it doesn't it must be extinguished with water (see above)

8. Tools

Hathern Church of England Primary School Forest School Use of tools Policy

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. The Forest school programme at Hathern C of E Primary School aims to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with tools will do so safely, with as little risk to their and others health as possible.

Organisation

- When tools are not in use for a Forest School Session they are locked in the toolbox in the locked Forest Friends room.
- The toolbox is only carried, opened, closed and handled by adults.
- Each tool has a typed and laminated Tool Talk accompanying it which will be read to the participants before they use the tool.
- The ratio for tool work is 1:1.
- The tools will be used at least a metre away from anyone else not involved.
- Children will be taught how to carry tools safely as part of the tool talk but will be accompanied 1:1 continuously.
- Bow saws have a blade guard on them which is only taken off and put back on by an adult.
- When not in use during the session the tools should be locked in the tool box by the adult.
- At least one Forest School Leader needs to be not involved in tool work at any time to maintain supervision of other participants.
- The first aid will be in the Happy bag in the central location of Base Camp.
- Emergency procedures will be followed if needed.

Arrangements

- All adults will have been trained by the Forest School Leader on the safe practise of tools with children and only when they feel confident will they be allowed to support children using them.
- The Forest School Leader will ensure the tools are in good working order before they are brought down for each session.
- The adult will stay with the child until the tool is back in the locked toolbox.

Bow Saw

- The adult will take out the Bow saw from the locked toolbox and begin the tool talk with the child ensuring full participation.
- They will talk about the job to be done and discuss the best area to do this in – finding a safe working area.
- The adult and child will then assume the respect position – one knee on the ground the other up to stabilise, they will then each place a hand on the bow saw and their helper hand through the saw to hold the piece of wood at least 5 inches away from the cutting edge. They will begin communication with the adult initially leading the sawing “Ready? To me, to you, to me etc. When the saw is

embedded helper hands will pass back through the saw and hold on to the wood on their side. When the saw is finished with the adult will put the blade cover back on and the adult and child will walk the bow saw back to be locked in the toolbox.

Loppers

- The adult will take out the Loppers from the locked toolbox and begin the tool talk with the child ensuring full participation.
- They will talk about the job to be done and discuss the best area to do this in – finding a safe working area.
- The adult and child will then go through the tool talk again to ensure full safety such as no gloves, hands on handles and checking the width of the wood to be cut. When the loppers are finished with the adult and child will walk the Loppers back to be locked in the toolbox.

Peelers

- The adult will take out the peeler from the locked toolbox and begin the tool talk with the child ensuring full participation.
- They will talk about the job to be done and discuss the best area to do this in – finding a safe working area.
- The adult and child will then go through the tool talk again to ensure full safety such as a glove on the helper hand, assuming the respect position – one knee on the ground and one knee up to stabilise, ensuring the helper hand is at the top of the stick, ensuring the peeler is moving down towards the ground in a slow controlled motion. When the peeler is finished with the adult and child will walk the peeler back to be locked in the toolbox.

Scissors

- The adult will take out the scissors from the locked toolbox and begin the tool talk with the child ensuring full participation.
- They will talk about the job to be done and discuss the best area to do this in – finding a safe working area.
- The adult and child will then go through the tool talk again to ensure full safety such as a glove on the helper hand, assuming the respect position – one knee on the ground and one knee up to stabilise, ensuring the helper hand is holding the thing to be cut to stabilise it but at least 4 inches away from the cutting point. When the scissors are finished with the adult and child will walk the scissors back to be locked in the toolbox.

Please see tool talks for more information about safe use.

Protection

- Gloves will be worn on the helper hand of all participants including adults.
- Trousers and long sleeves will be worn at all times.
- Appropriate footwear will be worn by all participants and provided if needed.

9. Toileting

Children will be encouraged to go to the toilet before we leave the classroom and begin getting ready. We have made the decision to allow the children to visit the toilet during snack time back in the school building if they need to go. We have decided to not establish a “wee tree” due to the area being used by many different groups of children during the day and we do not want to confuse boundaries.

10.The Pond

Hathern Church of England Primary School Forest School Use of the pond

Using this special part of our environment is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop an understanding of safety around water and an ecological understanding of the ecosystem. The Forest school programme at Hathern C of E Primary School aims to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions when the pond is in use will do so safely, with as little risk to their and others health as possible.

Organisation

- When the pond is not planned for or in use by a Forest School Session the wooden fence and gates are locked and the nature garden contained in the metal fenced area will remain locked.
- The fence is unlocked by the Forest School Level 3 Leader only.
- The ratio for pond work is 1:3
- Children will be taught how to move around and explore the pond safely as part of the briefing but will be accompanied 1:3 continuously.
- At least one Forest School Leader needs to be not involved in tool, pond, fire work at any time to maintain supervision of other participants.
- The first aid will be in the Happy bag in the central location of Base Camp.
- Emergency procedures will be followed if needed.

Arrangements

- All adults will have been trained by the Forest School Leader on the safe practise of using the pond with children and only when they feel confident will they be allowed to support children using this area.
- The adult will stay with the child/ren until the pond gate is locked.