

DUNECHT PRIMARY

# FOREST SCHOOL

# HANDBOOK



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## **1) FOREST SCHOOL INFORMATION**

### **What is Forest School?**

Forest Schools (FS) is the concept of an outdoor learning environment where children and adults can access nature, lead their own learning and take risks in a controlled setting; these concepts are all aimed at building confidence and self-esteem. A typical forest school session may involve the participants travelling on foot to a local woodland or wooded area to partake in regular environmental education/outdoor learning-based activities. A typical session may last 2 hours or more and could involve the building and lighting of a fire, the construction of a shelter and the cooking and eating of food. Preferably these sessions would continue on a regular basis to support child-led or client-led activities and build increasing confidence.

The Forest School ethos has six principles, which were agreed by the UK Forest School community in 2011.

<https://forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

### **Principles and criteria for good practice**

**Principle 1:** 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.

**Principle 2:** 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.

**Principle 3:** Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

**Principle 4:** Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

**Principle 5:** Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

**Principle 6:** Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

## Forest School at Dunecht

The aim of the Forest School sessions at Dunecht are to provide a stimulating and natural environment with a holistic approach to teaching and learning where pupils, parents and staff feel empowered to lead their own and others development.

Pupils, staff and volunteers are involved in the planning process which encourages and supports progression in learning. Every activity we undertake at our Forest School (FS) has the pupil's development and their safety at the centre.



Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous and aim to encourage independent learners who are inspired to use their own initiative, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas. Some activities might include:

- Den building and Shelter building
- Campfire building & lighting
- Cooking on an open fire
- Investigating & studying wildlife
- Playing team games
- Sensory activities
- Using tools such as knives and saws
- Rope and string work
- Bush-craft activities
- Art and sculpture work
- Creating stories and drama
- Problem solving activities

## 2) CONTACT DETAILS

Name:	Lindsey Duncan	Oliver McMillan
Position:	Forest School & Outdoor Learning Practitioner	Dunecht School Headteacher and Forest School Practitioner
PVG No.	1610063706820354	1206 1191 7880 0392

Qualifications:	Forest School Level 3 Award Campfire Food Hygiene Certificate Paediatric & Outdoor First Aid	Forest School Level 3 Award
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**LOCATION & ACCESS**

What 3 words: overdone.shaped.scrubbing

Grid Ref – x – 375225, y – 808365      NJ 75225 088365



Our site is located on Dunecht Estate at the above grid reference - marked on the map with a red dot. The site has been agreed with Dunecht Estate and our contact is Bob Booth. He must be contacted and informed of all Forest School dates.

Email - [bob.booth@dunechtestates.co.uk](mailto:bob.booth@dunechtestates.co.uk) Telephone – 01330 860 223

Access to the site is gained via the estate entrance in Dunecht Village and the road is followed to the site located in the Dairy Wood. Other areas of the estate can be used through prior arrangement with Bob.

### 3) HOW THE SESSIONS WORK

#### (i) Pre-planning, Preparation and Review

- Lindsey Duncan is responsible for co-ordinating the organisation of the Forest School session: Communicating with staff, volunteers and pupils as to their role in the preparation for a session.
- Site and General Risk Assessments are to be completed prior to every session by Lindsey Duncan. Risk assessments must be used as a working document and any changes prior to or during a session must be noted.
- During and after every session, pupils, volunteers and staff discuss the successes of the day and highlight any areas for future improvement.

#### (ii) Travel to and From the Site

- This varies depending on the group and where the session is taking place.

#### (iii) Appropriate Clothing and Footwear

- All pupils, staff and Volunteers must be adequately dressed to suit the weather conditions and waterproof clothing must be carried by everyone.
- Pupils will be informed of the weather forecast the day prior to a FS session.
- Spare waterproof clothing can be provided by the school and these can be distributed to pupils prior to departure if required.
- Everyone is encouraged to wear sturdy walking boots; wellington boots are a suitable 2<sup>nd</sup> option. At the very least footwear must be water resistant.
- If a pupil is not adequately dressed to suit the weather conditions every attempt will be made prior to departure to provide the clothing they need.
- If a pupil is unable to be adequately dressed it is the responsibility of their class teacher to provide classroom-based work to be completed under the supervision of another class teacher.

#### (iv) Shelter, Toilet and Washing Arrangements

##### Shelter

- The sites used are well sheltered from adverse weather conditions. A parachute can be erected on site to offer further shelter from heavier rain fall.
- On particularly wet days tarpaulins that can be erected to provide further shelter.

##### Toilet

- Some sites make use of a latrine. Privacy is maintained by using tarps or a windbreak to create a private, sheltered space. A plastic box (with toilet roll and bags etc) is kept at the main camp on a specified area which is to be taken with you when going to the toilet. If the box is not on the stump this indicates that the latrine is engaged.

### **Hand Washing**

- Hand washing is compulsory after going to the toilet and before any food preparation or consumption of food. If a pupil comes into contact with something deemed harmful (e.g animal or bird faeces, dead animal, fungi) a volunteer or staff member will remind them to wash their hands immediately.
- Ecologically friendly hand soap will be provided.

### **(v) Ratios, Staff, Role of Adult Helpers & Boundaries**

#### **Ratios**

A staffing ratio of 1:6 is the minimum requirement of FS. Any activity undertaken is risk assessed and appropriate ratio of pupils to staff is ensured.

#### **Role of Adult Helpers**

Adults assisting the Forest School Leaders need to become familiar with the Forest School handbook and all the procedures contained within it. This will enable them to effectively support the group leader. They will assist with the walking of children to & from the site. They will take part in the pre-session briefings and assist with activities such as tool use and fire lighting. They will take an active role in FS activities.

#### **Boundaries**

The designated boundaries will be discussed at the start of each FS session. Pupils are expected to know and adhere to the rule of always being in sight of a member of staff. Pupils will also be informed and expected to know that they may not cross the road to the east of the base camp or the forestry track to the south and they may not climb over any fences.

## **POLICY DOCUMENTS**

### **(a) Emergency Procedures Policy**

#### **In case of serious injury**

All participants will be briefed in what to do in case of emergency. The regroup whistle will be blown as a signal to stop what you are doing and gather at the main camp and wait for instructions from a member of staff. The FS Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will instruct another adult to ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised. They will attend to the casualty, giving first aid of necessary. An incident report will be completed later.

A serious injury is an injury that is assessed as being too serious to treat solely on site with first aid.

- 999 should be dialled using a mobile phone carried by the Forest School Leader and then the school office will be notified. School procedures will be followed from this point.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident, and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
- The member of staff with the vehicle will meet the ambulance at the nearest accessible point and direct the crew to the incident.
- If the injured child is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the child's parent will be updated about the situation by the school office.

### In Case of Minor Injury

The FS Leader is made aware of the injured party and will instruct another person to get the first aid kit if required. First aid will be administered on site. If the FS leader deems the injury to be significant enough to require after care the necessary steps will be taken in line with DPS policy. The pupil will be collected by their parent or guardian and taken to the hospital, doctor or home.

### Emergency Contact Numbers

Ambulance: 999

Dunecht School: 01330 700405

### (b) Medical Procedures

Specific medical details of any children will be with the class teacher. Steps taken to reduce the risk of medical emergency are as follows.

1. Any pupil with a medical history (e.g epilepsy, allergies or diabetes) which could impact on their or others' safety during a forest school session will be highlighted to any adult responsible for their wellbeing.
2. Any pupil with an inhaler or Epipen will carry it on their person and will be highlighted to any adult responsible for their wellbeing.
3. Any other medicinal needs (e.g prescriptions) will be carried by the teacher and administered as instructed by parental letter.

If an emergency situation develops the steps taken will follow the 'Serious Injury' Emergency Procedures (see page 10)

### Essential Equipment

The following items will be taken out to every full day Forest School session:

- Emergency bag containing: First Aid kit and Burns kit
- Drinking water
- Survival bag and foil blanket
- Sleeping bag
- Forest School Handbook (including accident sheets)
- Emergency whistle



- Large bucket of water to put out the fire
- Mobile phone
- Wet wipes, hand gel & nappy sacks

### **(c) Lost Person Procedure**

If it is discovered that a child is missing from the group, the situation will be taken very seriously from the outset and the following steps will be implemented:

1. The FS Leader shall be informed immediately.
2. Activity for the rest of the group shall be suspended in order that up to two members of staff, including the FS Leader if appropriate may be released to conduct a search which shall last no more than five minutes.
3. The remaining children will be given a low-risk activity to complete, within the main camp area by the remaining adults, being mindful not to increase anxiety of the group.
4. If, after the five-minute search, the child has not been located, the FS Leader will phone 999 and alert the police.
5. The school will be informed so that they can contact the child's parents and inform them of the situation.
6. Staff should corroborate details of the situation, including last known position of the missing child and any known timings. These will be recorded on the Emergency Procedures Record Sheet (Appendix B)

### **(d) Weather Procedures**

It is the responsibility of the FS leader to inform pupils of the weather forecast the day prior to any FS session to enable pupils to be fully prepared. Pupils are also reminded about appropriate clothing and footwear (see page 9).

- In the event that the weather forecast predicts poor conditions a decision will be made prior to departure on the day of the session by FS leader.
- FS leader will check the weather forecast on the day of the session.
- In the event that extreme weather prevents FS taking place pupils will remain at DPS under the guidance of their class teacher.
- If unexpected extreme weather conditions occur during a session it is the responsibility of the FS leader and the support team to decide on whether it is safe to continue the session or to abandon the session and return to school.














### **SITE EVACUATION**

In the event of a site evacuation being required for safety reasons the following steps should be actioned:

- Extinguish the fire

- FS leader and Volunteers return to school in leaders car to collect volunteer vehicles
- Pupils and 2 x staff remain on site, gather bags if safe to do so and travel on foot to the Pony Club to seek shelter.
- Pupils are transported from the Pony Club back to school in Volunteer and staff vehicles.
- When safe to do so staff and volunteers return to site to pack and clear the equipment.

## Beaufort Scale

Beaufort number	Wind Speed (mph)	Seaman's term		Effects on Land
0	Under 1	Calm		Calm; smoke rises vertically.
1	1-3	Light Air		Smoke drift indicates wind direction; vanes do not move.
2	4-7	Light Breeze		Wind felt on face; leaves rustle; vanes begin to move.
3	8-12	Gentle Breeze		Leaves, small twigs in constant motion; light flags extended.
4	13-18	Moderate Breeze		Dust, leaves and loose paper raised up; small branches move.
5	19-24	Fresh Breeze		Small trees begin to sway.
6	25-31	Strong Breeze		Large branches of trees in motion; whistling heard in wires.
7	32-38	Moderate Gale		Whole trees in motion; resistance felt in walking against the wind.
8	39-46	Fresh Gale		Twigs and small branches broken off trees.
9	47-54	Strong Gale		Slight structural damage occurs; slate blown from roofs.
10	55-63	Whole Gale		Seldom experienced on land; trees broken; structural damage occurs.
11	64-72	Storm		Very rarely experienced on land; usually with widespread damage.
12	73 or higher	Hurricane Force		Violence and destruction.

### (e) Fire Safety Procedures

#### General Fire Procedures

- A fire blanket is kept at the main camp and a bucket of water must be to hand.
- A fire circle of 1.5metres must be marked around any fire using logs, seating or other visible markings.
- Wind conditions must be considered before lighting a fire, especially in dry conditions to prevent the spread of fire. If FS leader deems the conditions to be too windy fires must be extinguished with water immediately.
- Only fire steels will be used to light a fire.

- The fire circle must not be crossed; pupils and staff must walk around the outside of the seating.
- The fire circle must be kept clear of any trip hazards, including bags and lunch boxes.
- Two pupils and one adult are permitted to enter the fire circle at the same time.
- The fire circle must be monitored by an adult at all times.
- If the fire circle cannot be monitored by an adult the fire must be extinguished with the use of water until smoke ceases.
- All fires to be extinguished at the end of the day using water until smoke ceases.

### Fires Out-with the Main Camp

- General fire procedures apply
- The first few cm of the Ground layer debris must be cleared to prevent destruction of habitat.
- Position fire away from overhanging branches and debris.
- A base must be prepared to further protect the ground layer
- Extinguish fire with water until smoke ceases and bury potash before returning the removed debris.

### (f) Tool Procedures & Risk Assessment procedures

Ratios are dependent on pupil skill level and type of tools being used. Use the following as a guide to minimum ratio of pupils with tools to adults. The FS leader decides on suitable numbers.

- |                              |                          |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Rope, String and Twine 6:1 | • Long Bladed Knives 2:1 |
| • Bow Saw 3:1                | • Carving Knives 2:1     |
| • Short Saw 3:1              | • Fires 4:1              |
| • Junior Hack Saw 4:1        | • Mallets 6:1            |
| • Potato Peelers 6:1         | • Tent Pegs 10:1         |
| • Short Bladed Knives 3:1    |                          |

All tools should be introduced using the following steps:

- Name the tool
- Explain its general use
- Explain the tool's use for this session
- Explain and demonstrate how to use it, including control actions from the Tool Risk Assessment (see appendix C)
- Show how to safely carry it
- Show how we clean it and maintain it
- Show how we store it both in the short and long term

All pupils are taught about, use the term and implement the 'Blood Bubble' when using tools. The Blood Bubble is the area that you can reach with the tool you are using. We aim to avoid others' Blood Bubble, however if it is entered the tool user must stop using their tool.



The FS Leader will carry out the following steps prior to, during and after every FS session. See appendices for full details of risk assessments.

- Visit the site on the morning of any FS session and complete the Site Risk Assessment (see appendix A) which must be authorised by the Head Teacher.
- Share the site risk assessment with everybody attending FS and remind them of key points at the start of every session.
- Complete and date Forest School Planner with Activity Risk Assessment for every session (see appendix B)
- Update the Tools Risk Assessment (see appendix C) as new tools are introduced. Ensure risk and control actions are shared with the pupils when introducing a tool.
- Any detail in a risk assessment that cannot be adhered to must be crossed through before or during a session.
- If a situation arises during a session that requires to be assessed this must be added to the Activity Risk Assessment (e.g. change in the weather or new activity suggested by pupils).
- Review Risk Assessments once annually or after any incidents.

#### (h) Daily Operating Procedures

##### Prior to each session

A daily risk assessment will be made, this will be in addition to the site risk assessment and the activity risk assessments already in place (for risk assessments please see the appendix/ ask a member of staff). If there are any changes to any risks, the appropriate controls are put in place and the risk assessments are reviewed and amended.

The weather forecast will be checked. A register will be taken. The Forest School Leaders will check that the equipment is in good working order and that there are no items missing. Staffing levels will be confirmed. A review of any medical requirements of any participants will take place. Collect FS group and register all who are coming for the session.

The teacher for the day will give each child a 'role call' number which will be used throughout the day.

### **During the session**

During the session all Forest School staff will make ongoing risk assessments including; weather, 'wild factors', activities, behaviour, and site. The Forest School Leader and assistants will make continual head counts. If there are any changes to any risks, the appropriate controls are put in place and the risk assessments are reviewed and amended.

### **After session**

At the end of the session a head count will be made and the children will follow the normal routine to return to school. The Forest School Leader will count in the tools and check that none are damaged. If any tools are damaged, they will be taped up to prevent them from being used until fixed/replaced. An evaluation will be made by the Forest School Staff on the session, this will inform future planning. Regular review meetings with Senior Management take place through the year

### **(i) Accident Reporting**

- a) Any first aid administered to be reported in line with School Policy
- b) Record of near misses to be kept in appendix D
- c) Accident review and action points to be recorded in appendix D
- d) Near miss review and action points to be recorded in appendix D
- e) All Risk Assessments to be reviewed if an accident occurs

### **(j) Safeguarding Children**

- This Forest School fully recognises its responsibilities for child protection and for confidentiality. The Protection of Children and Young People code, which applies to all staff and volunteers working in the school, can be viewed in the appendices and on the Aberdeenshire Council website.
- All Forest School staff and Forest School leaders have been PVG checked.

### **(k) Equal Opportunities**

This Forest School is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. The policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of all our children, irrespective of ethnicity,

attainment, age, disability, gender or background. Documents can be found in the appendices and also on the Aberdeenshire Council website.

**(l) Play Policy**

At Dunecht Forest School, children are provided with a stimulating and challenging environment. This enables the development and expansion of the children's learning experiences, empowering them to become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens.

For more information, please refer to the "Aberdeenshire Council Play Policy 2018-2021" using the following link:

<http://publications.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/dataset/council-policies-education/resource/43887845-82d0-487a-82ce-c8d1f53c5ddc>

**(m) Review Date**

- March 2023

**(n) Ownership/signed**

Signed: Lindsey Duncan (Level 3 Forest School Practitioner)  
Dated: 09/09/2020

**(o) Forest School Volunteers**

Information only - copy in master file ONLY to be signed

NAME	STATUS	HANDBOOK READ (SIGNATURE)