

BISHOPSWOOD SCHOOLS FEDERATION



FOREST SCHOOLS PARENT HANDBOOK



Introduction

At Bishopswood Federation we would like to offer children the opportunity to experience a wide range of activities that will support their future development. We believe that Forest Schools is an excellent experience for children with hands on learning in a woodland environment. But what is Forest School?

What is Forest School?

A typical Forest School session

Children will change into their outdoor clothing and be walked to the site, (in the school grounds). They will all be welcomed in and have a short circle time around the camp fire. The children will then have the opportunity to explore the woodland and be introduced to different activities such as den building, camp fires and mud play. The children can choose what they would like to do and will be supported by the staff to do this. Camp fires and tool use will be introduced gradually and in a supportive and safe way. During the session the children will have a drink and snack, before a short reflection activity at the end of their time in the woodland. They will come back into class and change into their school clothes.

The principles of Forest School

The Forest School Association follows 6 main principles:

- Long term process – regular visits to the same place.
- Take place in a woodland or natural environment – this creates a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- Aims to promote a holistic approach to the learning – supporting their resilience, confidence, independence and creative side.
- Supports risk taking – these risk are appropriate to the children and the environment.
- Run by qualified practitioners – they are able to maintain a professional practice.
- Range of child centred processes – these create a community for development and learning.

“Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and complements the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.” (Forest School Association).

In order to ensure that everyone works together to look after the environment and is safe during Forest School, the following rules are to be abided by:

Forest School rules

- Always stay in the Forest School site
- Never eat anything unless an adult says so
- Look after everything and everybody

Country side code

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Staff

At Bishopswood Schools Federation we aim to provide the children with a safe and secure environment working with adults who understand the principles behind Forest Schools and understand their role at the site. All staff have DBS checking in line with Bishopswood Federation Child Protection Policy (appendix 5) and have had training on Forest School principles, all emergency procedures, as well as school rules and regulations. They will sign the handbook to confirm they have read and understood it. We operate a 1:5 ratio in line with Forest School recommendation. If children need additional support an extra adult will accompany them. See activity risk assessment for specific fire and tools ratios.

Health & Safety

At Bishopswood Schools Federation our primary aim is to ensure children are safe at all times. The Forest School policy is written in conjunction with the school policy but at no time changes the original policy. These are the minimum requirements for Forest School to run safely.

It is the intent of Bishopswood Federation staff to ensure that both adults and children can experience Forest School with the varied activities it can offer, safely in accordance with the Health and Safety in the Work place act. We complete regular health and safety checks on the site prior to a session to ensure it is fit for purpose.

First Aid

As part of the essential equipment a first aid kit will be available at all times during a forest school session. There will also be a burns kit located next to the fire pit at all times. First aid will only be administered by staff who are first aid trained. Forest school leader to have a phone on them at all times.

Parents will be asked to ensure their child is supplied with:

- Appropriate clothing for the weather conditions
- Suitable shoes – wellies or walking shoes
- Sun cream (if applicable)

Clothing Expectations

It is expected that all adults and children will wear appropriate clothing in order to ensure they can participate in the activities successfully. These are the recommendations for clothing for all weather conditions.

Winter clothing	Summer clothing
Long sleeved top/jumper	Light long-sleeved top
Long trouser	Light long trousers
Warm hat and gloves	Sun hat/cap
Walking boots (wellies can be cold and slippery)	Wellies or waterproof trainers
Waterproof trousers	Waterproof coat
Waterproof coat	Waterproof trousers
Snoods	Sun cream

Tools

At Bishopswood Forest School there will be a selection of tools available. These tools will be kept in a locked tool box in school. They will be available in the tool area at the forest school site. They will be supervised by an adult on a 1:1 basis initially and if appropriate 1:2.

The tool available to the children are:

- Peelers
- Sheath knife
- Palm drill
- Bow saw

Children will follow instructions described in the activity risk assessment forms for each different tool. These are available to read on our school website or as a paper copy from the school office.

Toileting

At Bishopswood all children will have the opportunity to go to the toilet prior to starting the session. If children need to use the toilet during the session, they will be escorted back to school.

Food

During the session children will be offered a drink and a snack. This will be a vegetarian option and will include foods that can be foraged in the local area, e.g. blackberries, apples, or wild garlic. Any hot food will be cooked on the camp fire. Please include dietary requirements in the consent form.

Parental consent

Parent will be asked to fill in the consent form prior to their child starting Forest School at Bishopswood.