

***Diocese of Nottingham***  
**...working in partnership with**  
**The Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Trust**

**St Philip Neri with St Bede Catholic Voluntary Academy**  
**Policy Document**



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**Forest School**

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Written by:	Approved by:	Approval Date:	Review Date:
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## **What is Forest School?**

Forest school is an inspirational concept which provides a range of different opportunities for children. They will participate in a range of practical activities and experiences outdoors. Even though the name of the concept is Forest School, the outdoor environment does not necessarily need to be a forest itself. It can be any suitable outdoor environment that is set up under the Forest School ethos. This ethos is to provide the children with the freedom to explore, touch, smell, listen to and feel what it is like to be in the great outdoors.

Forest Schools originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s where practitioners noticed that children who had regular contact with nature and access to outdoor play and experienced more practical and physical outdoor play. By doing this, the children showed greater self-awareness and self-regulation of behaviour and developed better social and communication skills as well as showing an improvement in their physical skills and independence.

## **Why have we implemented a Forest School?**

At St Philip Neri with St Bede's school, we aim for our Forest School to provide the children with opportunities to play, learn, explore and experience the natural world. These experiences help those who take part to develop problem-solving skills, enable them to make decisions and help them to learn to take and manage risks. It will also encourage them to work as a team, to be creative, learn new skills and importantly help enhance independence and self-esteem.

The hands-on nature of Forest Schools actively encourages children to try things out, take risks, learn to problem-solve and work cooperatively with others. The children will learn a range of practical skills like how to make a fire, how to cut wood with a variety of tools to create a range of different things as well as learning to identify some of the wonderful flowers, trees, insects and animals that populate our woodlands and outdoor areas.

Forest School proposes to empower the children to take ownership of their learning as well as providing opportunities for the children to care for the environment.

## **Forest School Leaders**

Forest school sessions at St Philip Neri with St Bede are led by Rowena Taylor (Teacher) or Clare Brizzolara (Child and Family support worker) alongside the adults most familiar with the children (class teacher and year group TAs) Both leaders of Forest School are trained to support your child in experiencing and learning new skills in a safe way. They hold their Level 3 Forest School Qualification.

## **The Role of a Forest School Leader**

- To ensure the safety of children and adults whilst at the site.
- Provide clear guidance and expectations to adults and children.
- Carry out a safety sweep before each session
- Use dynamic risk assessing throughout all sessions.
- Ask open-ended questions rather than directing them to activities/ telling them what to do.
- Record observations where appropriate.

## **Forest School Sessions**

All children at St Philip Neri with St Bede have the opportunity to take part in forest school sessions each year. Each year group receives a block of sessions over one half term, by the time a child leave St Philip's they will have had the opportunity to experience Forest Schools in all four seasons.

Advent 1: Year 1

Lent 1: Year 3

Pentecost 1: Year 5

Advent 2: Year 2

Lent 2: Year 4

Pentecost 2: Year 6

Foundation Stage children receive forest school sessions within their familiar setting of the foundation stage field. Additional sessions are also run for either individuals/small groups/classes or Year groups that would benefit from further sessions.

## **What will they learn?**

During their sessions children will learn to respect themselves and feel a sense of self-worth. They will learn to respect others and how to work co-operatively with them. They will learn to respect their environment and the living world around them. Forest school leaders are trained to assess a child's current emotional intelligence, wellbeing and engagement levels and plan future sessions to develop these skills at a pace that is right for each child. In addition to this all children will learn a range of practical skills and knowledge of woodland flora and fauna as set out in the forest school progression document.

Every child will be kept safe whilst experiencing a healthy level of risk. It is important that children begin to have an awareness of danger and be able to manage their own safety to a degree.

## Forest School Rules

During all Forest School Sessions we continue to embed the school behaviour policy, making use of the OPAL play charter, and reward using the school virtues.



In addition to this specific rules relating to the Forest school site are:

- Show respect towards yourself, each other and the environment.
- Do not pick anything growing (without permission from an adult)
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth
- Stay within the boundaries marked, we don't go over it and we don't go under it
- Stay outside of the fire circle
- Look above, below and around for hazards.

## **Behaviour Management**

St. Philip Neri with St. Bede's Behaviour Policy sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to Behaviour Management. This will be followed throughout forest school sessions. At any point if the forest school lead feels a child is not safe to continue Forest schools due to their behaviour then they must be accompanied back to the school building and their buddy class.

## **Activities and Equipment**

We will be providing the children with a variety of activities and a range of skills in order for them to develop throughout their lives. The activities aim to enhance self-esteem and confidence in young children. These carefully planned activities will provide freedom and choice within a safe environment.

The activities are fun and engaging as well as enabling children to develop innate life skills such as communication, team work and independence. Working outdoors with different tools and allowing the children to express themselves in a way which is comfortable to them raises opportunity for language development.

## **Health and Safety in the Forest School**

St. Philip Neri with St. Bede's Health and Safety Policy sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the school's approach to the health and safety of its children, staff and visitors to the School. The following is a 4 point list of additional measures ***relating directly*** to Forest School sessions.

1. However many adults accompany Forest School sessions, the person in charge is always the trained Forest School Leader.
2. The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in his/her charge, but all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.
3. The Forest School Leader will always carry a mobile phone/walkie-talkie.
4. When tools are used the adult: tool ratio will always be 1:1 (the number of children involved will depend on the tool but will never be more than a small group).

## **Toileting Procedure**

If a child needs the toilet they can go anytime (by returning to the school building), ensuring the adult knows where they are.

## **Use of Fire in the Forest School**

Fires must only be lit after a risk assessment has been carried out and they must only be within the fire circle area. This includes the use of Kelly Kettles. There must always be a trained adult present within the fire circle when a fire is lit or hot embers remain, never leave a fire unattended.

There must be an adequate supply of firewater close to the fire basket to ensure there is enough water available to extinguish the fire if it gets out of control. A fire blanket must be brought into the woodland to wrap round someone if their clothes become alight. Fireproof gauntlets should be kept at the fire area to allow adults to pick up hot items.

Before visiting the area the children should have had the opportunity to ask questions and be given information about fire safety. When at the fire circle the rules should be demonstrated for the children to see. There should be no more than 2 people, adults and children, within the fire circle next to the fire at any one time. The best position for cooking is on one knee so you can move backwards easily and remain stable. Long hair should be tied back and scarves removed.

## **Tools**

The children will have an opportunity to use a range of tools. Please do not worry as the forest school leader has been appropriately trained in how to use each tool with the children.

The tools the children will have the opportunity of using will be:

- Bow saw
- Hacksaw
- Potato Peeler
- Small Knife

## **Clothing list**

The children will be taking part in Forest School sessions throughout the year. The weather will not put us off exploring the outdoor area and therefore the children will need to have appropriate clothing.

**Suitable footwear needs to worn throughout the year (NO sandals or flip-flops)**

<b>Autumn/winter</b>	<b>Spring/Summer</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wellington boots</li><li>• Woolly hat</li><li>• Gloves</li><li>• Waterproof jacket</li><li>• Waterproof trousers</li><li>• Winter PE kit.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sun hat</li><li>• PE kit- we recommend both legs and arms are covered at all times.</li><li>• Wellington boots/ trainers</li><li>• Waterproof coat if weather requires.</li></ul>

## **Accident and Emergency Procedure/ First aid/ Lost or missing child/ Death or serious accident/ Irregular occurrence, uninvited person/stranger**

All the above follow the policies and procedures already set out for our school site.

## **Poor weather conditions**

1. If trees blowing more than 20 degrees, or if group leader feels uncomfortable take emergency 'safe' route out ASAP.
2. Use indoor areas or shelter outdoors (away from trees) areas as alternative.

## **Disposal of food & waste Policy**

A responsible Forest School must ensure that we make no detrimental impact on it's natural surrounding environment, this includes the correct management and disposal of food, litter and waste. To achieve this the following procedures will be followed at every session:

Recap with the group our responsibility to the environment and the need to keep it clean and uncontaminated.

All litter must be put straight into a designated rubbish bag or box, making sure there is no risk of any rubbish being blown away by the wind.

Wastewater that is not contaminated by food scraps or chemicals can be tipped away or used to douse the campfire.

Any water that has been contaminated with chemicals/food scraps should be transferred into a suitable container and taken back to school to be disposed of.

Any leftover/waste food should be put into the designated rubbish bag/box and taken back to school to be disposed of.

At the end of every session a thorough check of the site must be undertaken to ensure no litter or waste is left behind.