



Gorran School



Forest School Handbook

Contents

What is Forest School	3
Our Ethos	3
Our Site	4
Code of Conduct	5-6
Forest School Rules	7
Procedures	7
Risk Management of Tools and Equipment	8
Risk Assessment Guidelines and Forms	8
First Aid	9
Designated Person of Responsibility	9
Health and Safety	10
Emergency Incident Procedures	10
Equal Opportunities and Inclusion	11
Safeguarding Children & Confidentiality	11
Insurance	12



What is Forest Schools?

Forest School is a long term, child-centred learning process 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 enables children to explore and discover their own personal boundaries whilst encouraging them to try things for themselves.



Sharing hot chocolate around a camp fire

Our Ethos

Ready, Respect, Safe

Every child will have regular Forest School sessions that will help them develop a respect and understanding for the natural world. Pupils will succeed through inspirational, stimulating, hands on experiences, developing their self-esteem, confidence and responsibility.



Our Site

At Gorran School we have a large field that includes a; large outdoor classroom, bike track, flowerbeds and a Forest School Area.



Our Forest School Area is a small wooded area that is enclosed by a fence and includes a; pond, fire pit and log circle.



Code of Conduct

Boundaries

Children will always be made aware of how far they can explore before a session begins. Even though our site is secure and enclosed by fences, it is important that children remain visible and safe.

Picking up and playing with sticks.

Children will be allowed to carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but make sure they think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks can be dragged or carried with a child at both ends. Sticks must not be thrown, nor should children be allowed to pull them from living trees.



Tree climbing

Tree climbing is not allowed on our site due to the nature of the trees and how they have been pruned.

Rope and string use

Children will be taught how to use ropes to connect and transport materials but prevented from tying up other children or themselves! All string and rope must be collected up at the end of the session.

Carrying and transporting materials

The children should be encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials either by hand or using ropes. The safe way to lift, by bending your knees and keeping your back straight should be modelled by all adults. Heavier objects will be rolled, dragged or carried by more people.

Digging

There will be a designated area for digging. Children will be shown how to look after the tools. Children will be shown how to look carefully for insects and their habitats and look after them when they have found them.



Planting Hazel trees

Toileting

Children will always be encouraged to use the toilet before walking to our Forest School Area on the school's field. However, in the event of an emergency we are never far from the nearest toilet.

Eating and Drinking

Children will be taught not to eat anything found in the woods through 'stop, no pick, no lick'. If we take drinks or snacks outside we will ensure children use sanitizers and wipes to clean their hands before eating and drinking.



Wow moments

Fire Circle

In our Forest School Area we have a fire pit surrounded by a log circle. When a fire is lit children sit on logs approximately 1.5 metres from the fire. There is no running within, or around, the fire area. Anything carried to the log circle must be placed on the ground behind the seats. Pupils then step over the logs to sit down. The fire is never left unattended at any time and an adult is always there until it is extinguished. Only three people are allowed in the fire circle at any one time and they have to be invited in by an adult. When tending to the fire everyone must always adopt the 'respect position' with one knee on the ground and the other firmly on the ground. Children will be taught to wait for at least twenty seconds before eating anything that has been cooked on a fire and that they must remain seated until they are finished.



Roasting marshmallows

Collecting Wood

Wood can only be collected from the ground layer of our woodland.

Leaving the Site

The site must always be left as it is found. If artefacts are made using 'found materials' these may be taken off the site and back to school. Shelters should normally be demolished and imported materials taken back into school at the end of each session.



Forest School Rules

- Look after our Forest School
- Do not pick anything growing
- Do not climb trees
- Stay within the boundaries,
- Stay outside of the fire circle.
- Look above, below and around for hazards.
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth

Pre-session procedures

Before each session the responsible adult will:

- Carry out a thorough sweep of the site to check for litter, glass, animal faeces, etc. Any such items should be collected using disposable gloves and a plastic bag.
- At the same time boundary ropes, fences, gates and hedges should be checked to ensure that they are secure and safe.
- Trees should be checked for any broken or dead branches which may fall.
- Checks should be made that no dead twigs, etc. protruding at eye-level from bushes etc.
- Check weather conditions, if it is unduly windy or a thunder storm is imminent or has commenced, then it is not advisable to carry out a Forest school session.

End of session procedures

- Clear away everything.
- Collect up all rubbish so that it can be taken back to school, 'Leave the site as we found it.'
- Ensure that the fire is completely extinguished and any cooking utensils are ready to be taken back to school.
- Count all the tools back into the storage bags and boxes.
- Count children and adults and ensure that all are accounted for.
- Collect any assessment sheets or observations from adults. Discuss next steps/ideas with adults back at school site present.

Risk Management of Tools and Equipment

General rules for tool use:

- All tools must have additional risk assessment in the Forest Schools Folder.
- All tools to be stored in school securing, with Forest School leader having overall responsibility and access.
- Forest School Leader has responsibility and safe storage of tools at Forest School site.
- A designated area will be used for activities involving tools.
- Adults and children to sit when using tools.
- Never walk around with tools.
- Children will be taught to ensure they have 'a blood bubble' around them, when using tools.
- Tools are to be clean and sharp before use.
- Children can only use tools with Forest School Leader.

Risk Assessment Guidelines and Forms

Our General Forest School Risk Assessment will be reviewed every half term. In addition to this, a separate Risk Assessment will be in place for any activity that may require it.

Before each lesson our site is checked by the Forest School Leader for that session. A more thorough check is also carried out once every half term.

When checking for risks we:

- We look for hazards.
- We decide who might be harmed and how this might happen.
- We evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether changes need to be made.
- We record our findings.
- We review our assessments and revise them if necessary.
- We inform all adults accompanying the group.

Forest School Emergency Kit

For each session, the Forest School Leader will always take an emergency kit bag. This bag will contain:

- First Aid kit
- Medical information and emergency contact details of all in group
- Risk assessments
- Mobile phone
- Walkie Talkie
- Clean water
- Accident sheets
- Individual medication
- Blanket
- Wet wipes
- Tick remover
- Spare clothing
- Torch



Designated Person of Responsibility

The School's Forest School Lead is Mr Jones. Mr Jones is the school's EYFS teacher. He commenced Forest School Level 3 training in February 2023 and has a Paediatric First Aid Certificate. Mr Jones oversees the maintenance of our Forest School site and carries out all of the relevant safety checks and risk assessments.

During each session it is essential that all adults act as good role-models. This will help to ensure that every child feels safe and gains the maximum benefit from their Forest School experiences. The school's Forest School Lead will provide staff with any support that they need to deliver their own outdoor learning experiences. But as with other lessons, it is important that staff record any of their children's fabulous 'wow' moments. Consequently, all staff will have a camera/ipad at each session. Teaching Assistants will ensure that their group have their snacks and drinks and that there is a spare set of clothes. Teacher and TA will each have their own First Aid bag. The Teacher however will also carry, and issue, any medication for children that require it, e.g. Inhalers and EpiPens.

Health and Safety

Gorran School sets out a clear statement of intent regarding its approach to the health and safety of the children, staff and visitors to the school.

Additional measures relating directly to Forest School sessions are listed below:

1. However many adults accompany Forest School sessions the person in charge is always the 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. All adult helpers must read this handbook and appropriate risk assessments and understand and agree to comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School.
4. The Forest School Leader and /or assistant will carry a first aid kit and Emergency bag. The emergency bag will contain:
 - Essential survival equipment pertinent to the location and likely weather conditions.
 - Contact list for each child undertaking activities.
5. The Forest School leader will always carry a mobile in the case of an emergency.
6. In the event of an emergency, the Forest School leader will ensure that the school contacts the emergency services.
7. The Forest School leader will review the risk assessments before every Forest School activity.
8. When tools are used the Adult/child ratio will be always be 1:1 There is only one exception to this; the use of potato peelers for stick whittling.

Emergency Incident Procedures

Below are listed emergency scenarios and a brief outline of the procedures that we would consequently follow.

Children with minor injuries

Adult to Walkie Talkie the office to let them know that child with a minor injury will walk back into school with another child and go to school office.

Major injuries

Major injuries will be dealt with by Forest School Leader. Adult Support for the session will phone through to school so that the emergency services can be advised.

Adult Support will then support the rest of the class and make sure that every child is accounted for and sitting at base camp (normally log circle) until help arrives. Forest School Leader to record full details through school incident procedure back at school.

Evacuation of site

Children will be called back to base camp counted and then lined up and walked back into school.

Missing child

1. Search vicinity.
2. Assemble rest of children.
3. Call school office to alert them of the situation.
4. School office to call police and parent/guardian.
5. Follow school critical incident procedure.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

Gorran School is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of our children, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

We work hard to ensure that all children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued.
- Appreciate and value the differences they see in others.
- Are able to participate safely in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs.
- Are taught in groupings that allow them to experience success.
- Use materials that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds.
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles.
- Are set challenging targets that allow them to succeed.
- Participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

Safeguarding Children and Confidentiality

At Gorran School we take our Child Protection and confidentiality responsibilities very seriously. We believe that effective Child Protection requires sound procedures, good inter-agency cooperation and a workforce that is competent and confident in responding to child protection situations. A full copy our Safeguarding Policy is held in the school.

Insurance

The children Act 2004 and the Health and Safety Work Act 1974 place a number of legal responsibilities on the school. Gorrans School has insurance cover appropriate to its duties under this legislation, including Employer's and Public Liability Insurance. Responsibility will in most cases rest with the school but staff will take reasonable care, both for themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.



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