



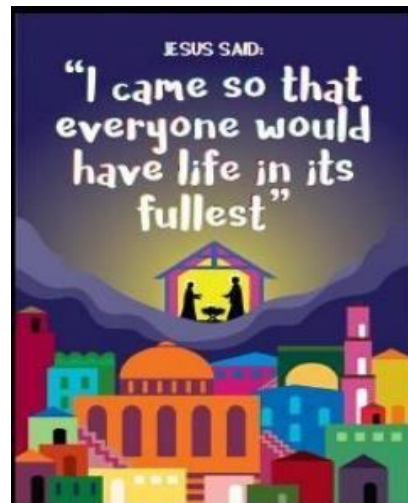
Forest School

St Luke's Christian ethos underpins all aspects of its policy and practice

St. Luke's CE Primary School

Where children *flourish*, are *happy* and *succeed*. Living their life to the full.

Believe and Achieve



Working together to be happy; to flourish; to succeed through our Christian Values of friendship, love, patience, forgiveness, trust and respect.

***"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."
John 10:10***



St Luke's CE Primary School Forest School Handbook





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Forest School is a fantastic and unique opportunity for all children to be involved in. It is a nature-based programme involving exploration, discovery and learning new knowledge and skills. The process helps and facilitates more than knowledge-gathering, it helps learners develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. It creates a safe, non-judgemental nurturing environment for learners to try stuff out and learn to take risks. Building confidence and self-esteem in learners is a key element of Forest School sessions and at St Luke's we believe confidence and self-esteem are integral in order for children to be happy, flourish and succeed.

Originally from Denmark, Forest School was originally a concept aimed at pre-school children. It was found that children who attended Forest School, started school with strong social and communication skills, could work in groups confidently and a high self-esteem and confidence. This then provided children with a strong foundation on which to build on and create lifelong learning.

At St Luke's Forest School we aim to create opportunities for children to:

- Develop confidence and self-esteem
- Solve problems and challenges
- Use tools safely to design and create
- Discover their own learning styles
- Learn how to manage risks
- Develop fine and gross motor skills
- Explore how nature can enhance wellbeing
- Explore how humans can help protect the Earth
- Reflect on their own learning
- Improve concentration
- Improve communication
- Develop mindfulness
- Develop spirituality





What happens at Forest School?



At St Luke's, each class has the opportunity to participate in Forest school sessions for at least 6 sessions per year. These sessions are led by our Level 3 qualified Forest School leaders. The children are given the opportunity to progressively develop their skills from Reception to Year 6. We also encourage child-led learning opportunities and as the weeks progress, children can initiate their own learning and are given more freedom and responsibility.

Sessions are inextricably linked to other areas of the curriculum including maths, English, science, RE, art, design and technology, music and geography.

Sessions are personalised to suit the needs of the class but the activities can include:

- Shelter building
- Natural art
- Fire lighting
- Investigating wildlife
- Identifying flora
- Using knots and lashings
- Climbing and balancing
- Woodwork
- Team games
- Reflection time
- Links to Bible stories





Links to the curriculum



At St Luke's, we are aware of the benefits of Forest School on engagement and learning. We wanted our children to be able to spend as much time as possible in the Forest School area. In order to do this, children take part in forest science sessions. During these sessions, we will incorporate the Forest School ethos and encourage child-led science exploration and discovery in an outdoor environment. Children will be taught age-related science objectives from the National Curriculum and then given the opportunity to investigate and explore these in our Forest School area.

Some of our Forest Science sessions could include:

- Investigating materials
- Exploring plants
- Creating and studying habitats
- Investigating evaporation
- Separating materials

As well as this, we also link our learning in our Collective worship to our forest school sessions. We do this by reflecting on the thought of the week, reading Bible stories and carrying out craft activities which link to our collective worship.





Forest School Site

Our Forest School area is located at the bottom of our school field. It is divided up into two areas: Our Forest School base and our wild forest. Our Forest School base is in a mature woodland area, which has recently been managed to include a fire circle area and some privacy fencing. This is usually the base for our sessions and where our large tarp is set up if we require shelter. The wild forest area is unmanaged and contains a selection of fruit trees and brambles, which provide fantastic biodiversity. We are located on the edge of Queens Park and sometimes take our sessions off site to explore the flora, fauna and waters that Queens Park has to offer.

We always ensure we have the necessary safety equipment on site at the Forest School Base. We also have handwashing facilities on site if needed. Toilets are located back in the school building.





Our Forest School Code of Conduct

- We understand that we must treat the woodland with respect and remember that it is our responsibility to look after the plants and animals. When we play, learn, investigate and explore in the area we need to make sure that we do not damage the environment.
- We understand that boundaries are important in Forest School to keep us safe. We will listen to the boundaries of each session- as these may change. When the leader shouts 'Explorers Return', we will ensure we go straight back to our meeting point.
- When our leader has confirmed that all the safety equipment is in place, they might light a fire. When a fire is lit, it will be in a safety square in the middle of the fire circle. We will make sure that we never walk through the fire circle unless asked to do so by the leader. We will make sure that we are always listening to and following safety instructions.
- When using tools, we will follow the safety instructions and listen to the leader.
- If carrying sticks around, we will make sure they are less than an arm's length and I will carry it sensibly and carefully. If I want to carry a bigger stick, I will ask for help and have a person at each end of the stick.
- If using stones, they can be safely picked up but should never be thrown.
- We must remember never to eat or drink anything from the woodland unless the leader has said it is safe. We must remember to wash our hands and never put our hands in our mouths after touching flora in the woodland.
- We must remember to leave the woodland as we have found it by returning any materials and taking any rubbish or equipment back to the school building.





Policies and Procedure



All school's policies and procedures will be followed on the Forest School site. This included the behaviour policy, safeguarding policy and equal opportunities. The following policies and procedures are Forest School specific.

Daily Procedures

To ensure the safety of children and adults attending Forest School sessions, there are certain checks that need to be made before, during and at the end of each session. It is the Forest School Leader's responsibility to ensure that all checks have been completed.

This daily health and safety checklist provides a reminder of all daily procedures. This must be used each day.

Pre-visit checks

- Run through the site risk assessment and amend/update as necessary. Remove all visible litter and faeces.
- Remove obvious trip hazards and mark off areas as out-of-bounds where appropriate.
- Cut any overhanging vegetation from paths and boardwalk.
- Ensure risk assessments are completed for all activities.
- Erect shelter (if needed).
- Set up hand washing station.
- Check that the forest school rucksack contains all necessary items including all emergency procedure information, a stocked and in date first aid kit, fire blanket and dated fresh water.
- Check you have all the materials and resources needed for the activities you have planned.
- Check that all tools you are planning to use are in good working order.
- Check that your phone is in working order, has sufficient credit and is fully charged.

At the start of the session

- Take register and head count.
- Remind children about physical boundaries (use visual cues when needed) and that they must stay within these. In the first sessions, and at the beginning of each session play a game to reinforce this.



- Remind children how they should behave and how to stay safe on site (see site risk assessment).
- Explain the need for, and principles of, fire safety.

Throughout the session

- Be vigilant.
- Remind children of how to stay safe by highlighting potential hazards (see individual activity risk assessments), reminding them of the boundaries and asking that they make an adult aware of any possible hazards that they spot.
- Carry out regular head counts at the start of activities and at break time.
- Take photos and make observations of individual children.
- Use de-escalating techniques whenever possible when dealing with behavioural issues.

At the end of the session

- Carry out a final head count and escort the group back to the school.
- Count and pack up all equipment.
- Count and pack up all resources.
- Clear fire area and make safe. Remove ash and cover over the site of fire.
- Evaluate the session.

What to wear when taking part in Forest School

Winter

- Waterproof coat
- Waterproof trousers
- Wellington boots
- Warm hat, scarf and gloves
- Warm trousers
- Long-sleeved jumper or fleece
- Long-sleeved top
- Vest or t-shirt
- Thick socks - thermal if possible or two pairs of thinner ones

Summer

- Waterproof coat and waterproof trousers in bag
- Walking boots, trainers or wellington boots - sandals are not suitable
- Sun hat
- Sunscreen
- Long-sleeved top or light shirt - to protect shoulders and arms
- Light trousers - shorts/skirts are not suitable



Adult Roles & Responsibilities

- The Trained and Named Forest School Leader is always the person in charge of Forest school sessions.
- The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in their charge. However all adults involved in the Forest School session are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that children are safe.
- The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry and take a first aid kit into the forest at every session.
- The Forest School Leader or Assistant will always carry an Emergency Bag into the forest for every session.
- The Forest School Leader will review the risk assessments before every trip into the School's Forest Site.
- When tools are used the adult child ratio will be 1:1
- There is one exception to this – when using peelers for whittling the ratio can be 1:2.
- The Forest School leader is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest school, prior to their use.
- The Forest Leader is responsible in training the children in how to use the tools and equipment safely and appropriately.
- The Forest leader will be responsible for the pre visit check of the Forest School site prior to a Forest School session.

Ambulance procedure

- Call the emergency service/s that you require on 999 from a landline or 112 from a mobile. Notify a member of Senior Management.
- Location of the nearest working landline if mobile not working / no signal is situated in the new building Year 6 classroom.
- Give as much information about the patient and their location as possible: Who has been injured? What their injuries are? If they have any medical conditions, Where on the site the patient is, The directions to the site and the patient.
- Arrange for someone to open and stand at the gate on Queens Park Road.
- Don't hang up until you are told to do so by the call taker.
- Try to stay calm.

Missing person procedure

- The following procedure should be instigated and followed by the Forest School Leader responsible for a group in the event of any person (adult or child) going missing from the Forest School group.
- Call 'Explorer's Return'. This signals that everyone should move to the Forest School circle.
- Conduct a head count to check that all other members of the group are present.
- Have two members of staff or volunteers stay with the group at the Forest School circle and await further instructions.



- Send the remaining staff and volunteers to search the immediate area for an agreed length of time (e.g. 10 minutes). Arrange for them to return to the agreed meeting place at an agreed time.
- Ensure that each of the searchers has a mobile phone with sufficient credit and battery life.
- Searchers should stay within an area they know and be aware of their own safety.
- If the missing person is not found in the agreed length of time, everyone should walk to the school. Here the rest of the group can wait in safety and comfort.
- Alert school staff to the fact that there is a missing person.
- Organise a second search party. Any staff member who knows the site can be recruited to help this second search. Searchers should work in pairs with at least one carrying a mobile phone with sufficient credit and battery life. Arrange for them to search for a specified length of time (e.g. 20 minutes) and return to reception at an agreed time.
- If the missing person is not found by this second search, then with SLT consent, contact the police. The decision may be made to do this while the second search is in progress depending on circumstances.

Fire procedure

- In the event of a fire that cannot be put out quickly and safely by the Forest School Leaders, blow repeated long whistles to alert the group.
- Gather everyone together, conduct a head count and evacuate area to a safe location –Playground meeting point in case of fire.
- Alert SMT and instruct one person to call the fire brigade and give directions to the site.
- Arrange for someone to stand at the entrance to the school to direct emergency services.

Campfire procedure

St Luke's Forest School provides opportunities for children to get closer to nature and the outdoors through a variety of activities, which include learning about fire safety and how to make fires through the use of campfires and Ghillie kettles. Children may also get the opportunity to light their own fires on wooden blocks or in small metal containers. This will only take place under strict supervision, with a one to one adult to child ratio.

All Forest School Leaders are skilled and practiced in fire-building and management. Ghillie kettles and small fires only will be used and lit in the centre of the Forest School circle. All Forest School activities are rigorously risk assessed. Sessions are planned in such a way as to introduce higher risk activities to children over a period of time. This allows Leaders to get to know the children in the group and for the children to learn how to behave responsibly and to build knowledge and understanding of the activity.



Boundary setting

In the first Forest School session, both physical and behavioural boundaries are agreed with the children. At each subsequent session, these boundaries are revisited and reinforced.

Developing routines – Sessions 1 and 2

- When they arrive at the Forest School site, children are shown how to sit round the Forest School circle (step over tree stumps and sit down).
- The need for, and principles of, fire safety are explained. This will include the rule that when Ghillie kettles or a fire are being used in the centre of the circle, only one child at a time is permitted to approach the Ghillie kettle or fire, on instruction from the Forest School Leader.
- The children are shown how to move around the circle (step out of circle and walk around outside).

Toilet and shelter facilities at Forest School

Toilet facilities

There are no toilets at the Forest School site. Children attending Forest School sessions will be informed in advance of the situation, and all children will be asked to go to the toilet before they leave school. Children who need the toilet. Will go in pairs back into the KS2 toilet in school. An assisting adult will accompany all children.

Shelter at the Forest School site

In case of inclement weather, a shelter from the elements will always be provided at the Forest School site. This will consist of one or more securely fixed tarpaulins which will provide shade in the summer months and protection from wind, rain and snow in the winter.

Litter and Waste Water Procedure.

All waste/litter created by Forest School, and any waste/litter will be collected for appropriate disposal.

- The Forest School Leader will provide waste containers.
- All waste produced or found on site during the Forest School session will be placed within the waste containers.
- At the end of the Forest School session the Forest School Leader will remove the waste containers for appropriate recycling/disposal.
- A small amount of waste water is created at Forest School, from hand washing and washing up. Solid debris is removed from the water for disposal in the waste containers. The waste water is then disposed in the woodland over a wide an area as possible, so it will evaporate quicker.



Poor Weather Procedures

We will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds, during thunder storms, or during periods of extreme cold. We will use the BBC weather online forecast to make judgments about the expected conditions. The Forest School Leader will make the decision to continue with Forest school or postpone due to bad weather. When it is wet a shelter will be built immediately by a trained adult so that there is a sheltered area that is available from the start that can be used.

