# Ripley Nursery School

# Forest School

# Handbook



## Ridgeway Farm Woods

## Heage Primary School

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## 1. Our Forest School Ethos

Forest school is a fun, creative and inspirational process which provides all learners with regular sessions in the outdoors. Forest school inspires individuals of any age to explore the natural world first hand in all weathers, developing a respect for the world around them.

Following a lightly structured series of objectives the learner is given many opportunities to investigate the area, working independently or collaboratively as part of a group. Professional practitioners support all learners during their time in the outdoors, adapting sessions when necessary and observing the interests of individuals. Forest school practitioners ensure all sessions maintain learner's curiosity and support their holistic development. Providing opportunities for the learners to assess and take risks appropriate to them.

Forest School encourages children to:

- develop personal and social skills
- work through practical problems and challenges
- use tools to create, build or manage
- discover how they learn best
- pursue knowledge that interests them
- learn how to manage failures
- build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- develop practical skills
- understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- regularly experience achievement and success
- reflect on learning and experiences
- develop their language and communication skills
- improve physical motor skills
- become more motivated
- improve their concentration skills

## 2. Our Forest School Code of Conduct

<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><u>Entering the Forest</u><br><br>We will enter the Forest respectfully and know that when at Forest School specific expectations are in place. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest environment. We understand that we share our Forest School with plants and animals and that when we are in our Forest School we are sharing the environment with them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><u>Boundaries</u><br><br>Before each session begins children are made aware of how far that they can explore and of any fixed boundary markers. If children move to explore hidden areas an adult should also move into the cover deep enough to be able to see the children but allowing the children the freedom to explore independently. If you lose sight of a child shout ‘1,2,3, where are you?’ The children have been taught to respond ‘1,2,3, I’m here’.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><u>Lighting a fire</u><br><br>When lighting a fire the Forest School leader will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. All fires will be made in a fire pit.</td>
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**At the Fire Circle**

An open fire will be lit in a fire pit. A fire circle using log sitting stools may be established around the perimeter, 1.5m from the fire pit. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There may be no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit.





**Using Tools**

All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include specific protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for.

**Picking up and playing with sticks**

Children can use and carry sticks around the site but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children. Long sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. We do not pull sticks off living trees or throw sticks around.





**Picking up and playing with stones**

Stones may be picked up and transported. Stones can be used to make patterns and pictures. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Digging**<br><br>Children can dig in the mud and are encouraged to use the mud to make and create natural art. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats. |  |
|  | **Collecting wood**<br><br>Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes. It is collected in different thicknesses – matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching. Sticks may also be collected for creating pictures and patterns. |
| **Eating and Drinking**<br><br>Nil by mouth policy for anything found in the Forest, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session (e.g. blackberry picking). Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes to clean their hands before consumption. |  |
|  | **Rope and String Use**<br><br>We encourage children to have their own ideas and take many resources to our site for the children to use. This includes rope and string in case the children would like to make swings or a rope bridge. An adult will help as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Carrying and Transporting Materials**<br><br>Children are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together. |  |
|  | **Toileting**<br><br>Children are invited to use the toilets before they leave the school building. Children may go to the toilet in a designated area behind our willow fence. We will take a potty to our site for the children to use. |
| **Tree Climbing**<br><br>An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the Forest. The ground cover should be checked for 'sharp objects' and the tree marked as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits and an adult will always be close by if assistance is needed. |  |
|  | **Leaving the Site**<br><br>We work according to the ethos 'leave no trace' that we were in the forest as much as is reasonably possible. All rubbish and toileting items will always be removed. If the children have made/ created something with natural materials the can leave them in the Forest or take them back to school with then. |

## 3. Forest School Staffing

| | |
|---|---|
| **Forest School Leader (Level 3)** | **Cathy Bednal**- Head Teacher<br>(Paediatric outdoor first aid)<br>**Claire Burrows**- Teacher<br>(Paediatric outdoor first aid) |
| **Forest School (Level 2)** | **Sarah Ashmore**-<br>SEN Early Years Educator<br>(Paediatric first aid)<br>**Cathryn Meredith**-<br>Early Years Educator<br>(Paediatric first aid) |
| **Other Staff** | **Tracey Wasley**<br>Lunch Time Support Worker |
| **Volunteer** | **Bob Tuff**<br>Forest School Bus Driver |

## 4. Essential equipment for Forest School

### HAPPY BAG

- First Aid Kit (Containing contact card with location using postcode and OS grid reference, Latex Gloves, Bandages, Plasters, Burns gel, Burn dressing, Dressings, Eye wash, Scissors, Antiseptic wipes, Medication for individual children, Sterile water, Bites and stings cream or spray)
- Emergency Procedures
- Medical information for each individual and Emergency contact details for every member of the group (adults & children)
- Risk Assessments
- Communication Devices (mobile phone – checked for working order and signal strength)
- Clean Water
- Emergency Life Blanket
- Accident forms
- Medication for individuals (if not appropriate for the individual to carry the medication for themselves it should be clearly labelled – staff must have been trained to administer it and parental consent must have been received)
- Appropriate Clothing
- Sharps box and gloves
- Wet wipes, hand gel
- Nappy sacks and toileting things
- Sun cream (parental permission required)
- Spare Clothing
- Thermos of hot water/ hot chocolate
- Plastic bag for rubbish
- Roll Mat and Blanket
- Burns kit

## 5. Emergency Action Plan

In the case of emergency in the woodland-

- Two members of staff to stay with/ deal with the emergency (FSL and BT) appropriate first aid administered. Emergency services contacted if necessary.
- One member of staff to call the emergency services/ parents/ school- going down to the road to wait for emergency services (FS Level 2)
- One member of staff plus parent helpers to supervise/ move children to a safe area or back to the bus (TW and parent helpers)
- All accidents or incidents to be reported in detail on the correct form.

### Emergency numbers

- Ripley Nursey School- 01773 745014
- Cathy Bednal- 07931572013
- Ripley Hospital- 01773 743456
- Ripley Police Station- 03451233333
- Site grid reference- SK 3590951877

### Emergency Procedures

- During onsite visit check that all staff members' mobile phones have signal, finding the best signal point.
- All staff members will be required to have full charge on mobile phone and have it with them at all times.
- An outdoor first aider will be onsite at all times
  Claire Burrows- Qualified first aider
  Cathy Bednal- Qualified first aider- Forest School Leader
  Sarah Ashmore- First aider- Forest School Level 2
  Cathyrn Meredith- First aider-Forest School Level 2
- First aid kit to be onsite at all times- checked before every session, containing emergency contact numbers.
- The woodland table and log benches will be the meeting point in an emergency.
- All parent helpers and volunteers to be aware of the emergency procedures before entering the woodland.

# 6. Daily Operating Procedure for Forest Schools

## Before the session

- A session plan will be completed taking in to account observations from previous sessions and individuals interests. All adults will read the session plans prior to the session.
- Forest School Site will be visited and set up prior to the children arriving. All equipment needed for Forest School session will be taken at this time.
- Site/ daily risk assessment to be undertaken prior to the children arriving. Tool risk assessments completed for sessions using tools. All adults to read risk assessments prior to the session.
- The Forest School leader will check that enough adults are present for the session to go ahead and that the weather conditions allow it to take place.
- All children to go to the toilet and get changed ready for Forest School in the veranda and registered. Sun cream and insect replant to be applied when necessary.

## During the session

- A head count will be undertaken as the children get on to the mini bus, arrive at the Forest School Site and whenever the group is brought back together.
- Risks will be continually assessed and appropriate action taken to reduce or remove any risks found.
- If any tools have been taken to site ensure no items are missing before we leave the site.

## After the session

- A head count will be undertaken at the end of the session before returning to the bus and as we enter the nursery building.
- Children to change out of their Forest School Clothes in the veranda.
- Children to record/ mark make what they have been doing, enjoyed during the session in their Forest School Diaries.
- After children have left all resources to be returned to their rightful places. Check and maintain tools as required.
- A session evaluation will be completed along with any observational records.

# 7. Risk Management Policy for Forest Schools

- Constantly apply the five step approach to risk assessment for all Forest School activities:
    - Look for hazards
    - Decide who may be harmed and how
    - Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done
    - Record findings, including daily amendments to standing risk assessments
    - Review risk assessments on a regular basis and revise if necessary

- Carry out site risk assessments on each site where Forest School activities will take place (to be found in Forest School planning folder).
- Daily pre visit checks will be carried out by Forest School leader prior to the children arriving. Findings will be recorded on daily risk assessment (to be found in Forest School planning folder).
- Complete a tools risk assessment for the use of tools during sessions (to be found in Forest Schools planning folder).
- Ensure all staff, volunteers and helpers have read the relevant site, daily and tools risk assessments prior to the session.
- In the event of high winds and extreme weather conditions Forest School will be postponed.
- Inform staff, volunteers, helpers and children of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise the risk.
- Involve staff, volunteers, helpers and children in risk assessments when appropriate as part of learning.
- Ensure everyone attending Forest School is aware of the emergency action plan when on site.

# 8. Child Protection Policy for Forest Schools

- All parent helpers will be accompanied by a member of staff at all times in the forest.
- The leader will ensure that any information disclosed in the forest is passed on to the safe guarding designated lead on return to school and all information recorded.
- Every effort is made to ensure that all children develop physically, mentally and confidently during Forest School sessions.
- The leader and nursery staff are trained to recognise indications of all forms of child abuse.
- If a child discloses information adults should not ask leading questions e.g. "what have you done?" not "who did that to you?"
- All helpers and volunteers are made aware of police and procedures before entering the woodland.
- Confidentiality must be maintained at all times amongst staff and helpers, all concerns should be discussed with the group leader.
- All children will be made aware of the forest boundaries at the beginning of each session.
- If a dog approaches the Forest School site children will be told to stand still and do not touch the dog. If necessary first aid will be given and the emergency services called.
- If a child is approached by a stranger the lost child procedure will be followed (see lost child procedures).
- Before hazardous activities the group leader will give a tool/safety talk.

# 9. Equal Opportunities Policy for Forest Schools

- All children in the correct age range attending Ripley Nursey School will have the opportunity to attend Forest School sessions.
- All children will be given the opportunity to take part in Forest Schools regardless of their age, gender, race, religions, affiliations, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability.
- All children and adults will contribute to sessions and all contributions will be valued.
- The Forest School site and activities will be adapted for children with additional needs.
    - Wheelchair access
    - 1:1 ratio
    - Appropriate risk assessments
    - Children prepared correctly before outings

- Planning can and will be adapted in the woodland to meet the needs of all of the children.
- All staff will be aware of all dietary requirements of children and adults.
- All staff will be aware of medical requirements of children and adults.
- Toilet facilities will be provided on site.

# 10. Health and Safety Policy for Forest Schools

- There must always be a level 3 trained Forest School leader on site at all times (Claire Burrows or Cathy Bednal).
- Level 3 Forest School Leaders to hold outdoor paediatric first aid qualification.
- Leader will be responsible for running all Forest School sessions and activities.
- Forest Schools gives encouragement to engage in potential hazardous activities (using tools and lighting an open fire) in a safe and secure environment using Forest School procedures under competent leadership.
- Ensure all equipment is suitable for its intended use and maintained in the correct way.
- Ensure that all members of staff are aware of the procedures in case of an accident.
- The school will provide the correct clothing for all children attending Forest Schools.
- The school has got the appropriate insurance to cover the Forest School outdoor learning.
- Ratio 1:3 in the woodland.
- All activities will be risk assessed and site risk assessment completed before ever session begins.
- Parents to sign a consent form before their child is eligible to attend Forest School.
- All parents to attend Forest School meeting before they assist in sessions. Appropriate information to be delivered- emergency procedures, toileting, first aid procedures (if meeting cannot be attended discussion with FSL prior to session ).
- Leader to have a forest school register and emergency contact details for all children and other adults.
- Leader to give activity description/ safety talk before activity commences.

# 11. Lost Child Policy for Forest Schools

- All children and helpers will be made aware of the Forest School boundaries at the beginning of each session.
- The only time the children are to leave the boundary is with a member of staff.
- If a child does find themselves out of the boundary they need to stop, stay still, do not follow anybody they do not know, call out and a member of staff will follow the sound.
- If a child is out of sight play '1, 2, 3 where are you' and follow the call '1,2,3 I'm over here'.
- If a child is approached by a stranger they do not recognise they will be taught to;
    - To shout HELP as loud as they can.
    - Find an adult they recognise as soon as possible and tell them what has happened.
    - NEVER leave the forest without a member of nursery staff.
    - You can only leave the forest past the magic tree when the magic door has been locked.

- When the children are called back they must gather at the log circle as soon as they can.
- If a child does not return 2 adults will be sent to look for them. One of the adults must be first aid trained and they will take the first aid kit with them.
- Keep in contact by using mobile phones between searching party and main group.
- School will keep all parents informed.
- Emergency services must be contacted if a child goes missing from Forest School site.

# 12. Tool Policy for Forest Schools

- Ripley Nursery School uses the following tools with nursery children at the present:
    - Bowsaw
    - Loppers
    - Palm/ hand drill

- Tools are used with 1:1 adult supervision at all times.
- The Forest School Leader and Forest School Assistant are responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools.
- Risk assessments are carried out for all activities using tools (to be found in the Forest Schools Planning Folder).
- All Forest School tools and safety equipment will be kept in a locked tool box on site on the nursery premises.
- Tools must be checked to make sure they are safe before every session. check for:
    - All screws and bolts are tight
    - Tools are clean
    - Blades are sharp
    - Saw blade cover is still on and protecting the blade
    - Safety catch on the loppers work

- After every session tools will be cleaned and returned to their safe place.
- If any tool becomes damaged it will be disposed of in a safe way and new equipment will be brought.
- If a bowsaw blade is no longer cutting effectively the blade it to be replaced.
- If a person receives a cut from any tool qualified first aider to administer first aid and if necessary the emergency services are to be called or person to be taken to A and E.

## 13. Transport Policy for Forest Schools

- Hired self-drive mini bus with experienced driver.
- All drivers will have a full driving licence and have the appropriate insurance.
- The bus driver will stay with the group on site at all times.
- The leader and bus driver will devise a suitable, safe route to get to the woodland.
- The bus will be adaptable for all children's additional needs.
- The bus will stop in the layby with the doors facing towards the woodland path so the children are protected from the road.
- If any children are travelling in staff cars staff member must have appropriate insurance. Must be two adults in the car. Staff members must not transport children to and from Forest Schools on their own.

## 14. Toileting Policy for Forest Schools

- Before we leave for our Forest School session the children will be given the opportunity to go to the toilet.
- A potty will be available during the Forest School session located in our toileting area behind the willow fence.
- Antibacterial solution will be used in the forest after a child has been used the potty.

# 15. Weather Policy for Forest Schools

- Weather will be monitored via weather forecast and radio stations prior to Forest School sessions.
- Weather will be assessed the morning of Forest School sessions.
- The Beaufort scale will be consulted on windy days. If the conditions are too high on the scale the session will be cancelled and rearranged for a different day or delivered in the nursey garden.
- The correct shelter will be erected on site according to the weather conditions.
- All children will be provided with appropriate clothing according to the weather. Waterproof suite, wellies, hats, scarfs and waterproof gloves. Spare clothes will also be available on site if needed.
- Parents will be advised on what to dress their children in on Forest School days.
- Parents will be advised to apply sun cream on warm/hot days. Nursery to take sun cream to apply or re-apply. Sun hat to be warn at all times on hot days.
- Children to have access to water throughout the session.

## 16. Beaufort Wind Force Scale

| | Average Miles per Hour | Knots | Surroundings |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0<br>Calm | | 0-1 | Smoke rises vertically and the sea is mirror smooth. |
| 1<br>Light air | 1.2- 3.0 | 1-3 | Smoke moves slightly with breeze and shows direction of the wind. |
| 2<br>Light breeze | 3.7- 7.5 | 4-6 | You can feel the breeze on your face and hear the leaves start to rustle. |
| 3<br>Gentle breeze | 8.0- 12.5 | 7-10 | Smoke will move horizontally and small branches start to sway, wind extends a light flag. |
| 4<br>Moderate | 13.0- 18.6 | 11-16 | Loose dust or sand on the ground will move and larger branches will sway, loose paper blows. |
| 5<br>Fresh breeze | 19.3- 25.0 | 17-21 | Surface waves form on water and small trees sway. |
| 6<br>Strong breeze | 25.5- 31.0 | 22-27 | Trees begin to bend with the force of the wind and causes whistling in telephone lines. Some spray on the sea surface. |
| 7<br>Moderate gale | 32.0- 38.0 | 28-33 | Large trees sway. Moderate sea spray. |
| 8<br>Fresh gale | 39.0- 46.0 | 34-40 | Twigs break from trees and long streaks of foam form on the ocean. |
| 9<br>Strong gale | 47.0- 55.0 | 41-47 | Branches break from trees. |
| 10<br>Whole gale | 56.0- 64.0 | 48-55 | Trees are uprooted and the sea takes on a white appearance. |
| 11<br>Storm | 65.0- 74.0 | 56-63 | Widespread damage. |
| 12<br>Hurricane | 75+ | 64+ | Structural damage on land and storm waves at sea. |

# 17. Fire Safety Policy for Forest Schools

- We light a fire on our last Forest School session at Heage Primary School.

**Location**

- We always use a fire pit to set our fire in and our fire will only be lit in the fire circle.
- The area will be clear and will be checked for any low hanging vegetation before the fire is lit.

**Positing of the children and adults**

- The fire area is surrounded by seating logs which are at least 1.5meters away from the fire pit.
- When the fire is lit the children are not permitted to access the area immediately surrounding the fire unless invited to by a member of staff.
- Children will be shown how to change seats or leave the fire circle by standing up, turning around so that you are facing away from the fire and walk forwards.
- Children must never cross the inner area.
- Children will demonstrate moving away from the fire safely before the fire is it.
- Once seated around the fire the children must remain seated until directed to by an adult to move.

**Fire lighting**

- Training has been provided to the Forest School Leader and Forest School Assistant regarding the way to construct and light the fire.
- Fire will be lit using a fire steal, cotton wool and natural tinder.
- Adult helpers will be encouraged to have a go to light the fire if they wish to.

**Safety and responsibility**

- A fire blanket, bucket of water and burns kit must be sited close to the fire at all times. Everyone on site to be made aware of where these items are.
- Only adults are permitted to light the fire.
- No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.

- Sticks/ wood must not be thrown on the fire. Any adults putting fuel on the fire must wear a fire resistant glove.

**Extinguishing**

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of the session.
- Whenever possible all fuels must be burnt off to an ash before the fire is extinguished.
- At the end of the session the fire must be doused down with water using a cup and a stick, adding water and stirring until all smoke and steam has ceased.
- When totally cooled the mixture should be scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

## 18. Cooking on a Campfire Procedures for Forest School

- Food hygiene regulations must be followed.
- Hands must be cleaned before eating.
- All food cooked and consumed must be in date.
- An adult will check that food is properly cooked before giving to the children.
- The temperature of the food will be checked before giving to the children.
- No food will be re heated.
- All allergies and dietary requirements will be considered and adhered to.
- If the children are using sticks to toast marshmallows these must be long enough for the children to stand or kneel away from the fire (sticks must be greenwood with all bark removed).
- Food should be placed on or in the fire and removed from the fire using a heat resistant glove. This is always done by an adult.

## 19. Waste Disposal Procedures for Forest School

- Adults will collect and dispose of any waste regardless of whether or not it is biodegradable.
- All participants are to be made aware of the position of the rubbish bag if they have anything to dispose of.
- A member of staff will be responsible for taking all rubbish back to school and dispose of it appropriately.
- All food waste will be taken back to school so it doesn't attract any vermin on site.
- Small amounts of waste water can be disposed of in the shrub layer of the forest. Any water still contained in bottles or water containers to be taken back to school.