



## HOLBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Forest School Policy

DELEGATION OF APPROVAL:	
FREQUENCY OF REVIEWS:	<i>Annually</i>
DATE APPROVED:	
CHAIR OF RESOURCES	<i>Paul Hesketh</i>
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS:	
DATE RECEIVED BY WGB:	
DATE NEXT REVIEW DUE:	December 2026

## Forest School Policy 2025-2026

### Curriculum

#### What we believe for our curriculum?

It is our intention that every pupil, irrelevant of needs, develops a real passion for the great outdoors. They should celebrate their local, natural environment. We wish for every child to use the outdoors to build self-esteem, be given the freedom to experiment and to thrive from taking appropriate risks.

Through Forest School we aim to support this philosophy by:

- Fostering the enjoyment of the great outdoors;
- Embracing the physical challenges that working outside can bring;
- Developing both fine and gross motor skills;
- Developing personal and social skills by working in teams to complete tasks;
- Developing a range of Forest School skills. Skills include knot tying, frapping, fire lighting, lashing and whittling.
- Developing a knowledge of local common flora and fauna;
- Fostering an awareness of seasonal change;
- Developing problem solving and resilience through practical tasks such as den building;
- Ensuring children develop an understanding of keeping safe;
- Encouraging children to be active and have a healthy lifestyle.
- Encouraging pupils to get involved with practical tasks. These tasks improve their attention span, persistence and commitment. This will impact on learning in other areas too.
- Ensuring that the learning is matched to the differing needs of all the children as well as groups. (SEND, pupil premium etc.) Extra support and additional/ adapted resources to be provided to those children where it is required.
- Our onsite 'Hollow' is used to give a context to learning across the whole curriculum. Children explore shadows and wind in Science. They make ink and charcoal in Art. Pupils use of tools for DT and brewing and tasting herbal teas and inspiration for writing and poetry.

We know that children learn best when the curriculum is well sequenced to enable revisiting of core knowledge, skills and understanding. This deepens conceptual awareness before demanding application across the whole curriculum. Please see the Forest School Progression of Skills documents. The grid outlines how the key skills are developed, revisited, assessed and built upon during Foundation to Year 6

### How we put our aims into daily practice

All classes participate in Forest School activities. This may be pure Forest School sessions run by a Level 3 qualified Forest School practitioner or a qualified Level 2 assistant or curriculum linked learning. Each week the Reception class spend 1 afternoon in the Forest School, Years 1 and 2 spend 1 afternoon a week throughout the year. Key stage two classes get to join key stage one classes for at least one session every term. Regular training of both teaching and non-teaching staff allows for all children to receive a quality session. All staff to understand the potential learning opportunities this resource has to offer. Forest School sessions happen whatever the weather – as the saying goes “there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing!” – the only exemptions being strong winds and heavy snow due to safety. Forest School sessions are planned to involve a mixture of both adult led and child initiated activities. Adult led tasks may involve the teaching and application of pure Forest School skills. Children are taught fire lighting, plant identification or whittling. The teaching of any area of the school curriculum enhances the outdoor learning environment. Children gain inspiration for writing or mini-beast hunts in Science. Forest School provides opportunities for all learners to exceed and excel. Children can excel socially and emotionally as well in their curriculum studies.

### We are successful because

1-Since 2018 we raised the profile of Forest School. KS1 data shows that Holbrook are consistently above national expectation at all levels. We know that Forest School sessions have a positive effect on learner attitudes through our pupil perception work... a Year 2 pupil told us, "it helps me to sit still and listen more and to follow agreements and why we have them.. The impact on our improving KS2 results is also demonstrated by what our pupils tell us. One Year 3 pupil said "Forest School teaches me how to look after wildlife and gives helps me with friendships". Another said, "Forest School helps me to concentrate more in other subjects". Other schools in our local area have heard about our successful practice and are inquiring about CPD sessions with us.

#### 2- The benefits

Forest School has the potential to enhance a child's learning across all areas of development: i.e. physical, creative, communication and spiritual, problem solving, reasoning, social/ emotional skills and understanding the world. Forest school has seen a clear improvement in children's confidence and self – esteem.

- Resilience – Forest school allows time for a child to persevere at a task and is repetitive, helping to build this skill.
- Confidence – Forest school promotes independence and a level of appropriate risk taking, promoting this attribute.
- Self – esteem – Forest school caters for all children and provides opportunities for all learners to exceed and excel.
- Discovery and exploration – Forest school promotes learning through play and discovery. Promoting a greater understanding and appreciating of the learning.

## **2) Pedagogy**

The Forest School Lead, the Forest School Subject Governor and the Executive Head Teacher regularly check that teaching approaches match the intended goals for pupils that are written. End of unit reviews ensure that Forest School content and concepts are remembered long term. For EYFS and KS1 pupils, The Forest School Lead and teachers check what pupils know in weekly Forest School sessions through discussions and carefully planned activities. Each weekly session begins with a recap of the learning that took place in the previous week and, where appropriate, links are made to learning from previous years, terms and other subjects.

## **3) Assessment**

The Forest School Lead's progression of skills grid is used termly to identify and address any gaps in knowledge, skills and vocabulary and understanding. Formative assessment is used weekly in verbal feedback and formal marking.

## **4) Culture**

Teachers have high expectations of what all pupils can learn in our outdoor environment which includes the Forest School, a wildlife pond and bird hide. Leaders foster a love of wildlife and the outdoors through extra-curricular activities e.g. 'Junior Foresters' and visitors e.g. local Swift expert.

## **5) Systems**

The Forest School Lead cyclically evaluates strengths and development areas for this extra-curricular area. They use the Holbrook annual subject leader cycle to support them in their evaluations, e.g. pupil perception, work sampling, learning walks, staff and subject lead CPD.

## **6) Policy**

EYFS and KS1, visit the Forest School on a weekly basis for pure Forest School Sessions. Where appropriate, the Forest School is interwoven within school wide curriculum schemata for all classes. For example, the study of mini beasts and their habitats or ecosystems in Science and, in English, inspiration for Poetry writing inspired by Way Through the Woods by R. Kipling.

## **Health & Safety:**

The Forest School curriculum supports children to develop responsibility for themselves and others. Encourage early risk management strategies that will ensure that young children start to consider the impact of their actions on themselves and on others. A site risk assessment has been carried out and a copy is held in the Subject Leader's File. The Forest School Leader has an up-to-date certificate in Outdoor First Aid and is in charge of first aid arrangement. All staff have first aid training. A first aid kit is taken on all sessions. Fires are a valuable part of the Forest School experience but will only be lit according to the procedures below

### **Lighting a fire**

#### Policy and Procedures for Lighting Fires

Before lighting a fire at Forest School, the following should be in place:

- Children must have a secure knowledge of log circle safety
- Stand behind the log
- Step over and sit down on log
- Stand up, turn around and step over log
- Children are not allowed to cross the circle or step into the circle unless invited to by an adult

In addition to the other resources, a large container full of water should be available in case of emergency. When lighting a fire

- Only a trained Forest School Practitioner will take responsibility for the fire. This will be their sole responsibility for the session. They shall be responsible for lighting it, manning it while it is burning and putting it out at the end of the session.
- The fire shall be contained within the area marked out within the centre of the log circle.
- The ground around shall be cleared of flammable material.
- Check for low overhanging trees.
- Have a container of water beside the fire to put it out and deal with burns.
- The flames of the fire should never reach higher than the knee.
- While the fire is being lit, the children will observe from a safe distance
- The fire will be extinguished before the session ends.
- NO fires will be lit during peak fire risk periods.
- All adults are aware of the following when cooking and eating around the campfire:
- Everyone should wipe their hands before handling food and drink.
- All foods are stored in air tight containers.
- Only clean equipment is used.
- Everyone is aware of any special dietary needs of the children who have food allergies and any medication they need.
- Food will be cooked correctly.
- All equipment and waste is cleared away.

- A fire blanket is taken to the Forest School for all sessions when having a fire.

### How are pupils kept safe?

The children are kept safe in forest school by following the forest school agreements, have appropriate risk assessment up to date. A full first aid kit is always taken down, and extra safety equipment with the group for certain sessions, e.g. fire and tool use. The correct ratio of staff to children for the session and by having an adult near to the activities like den building, fires or tool use. The teacher for the session always carries a walkie talkie which is in contact with the office at all times. If the children need to wear extra safety clothing such as gloves they are provided by the forest school lead for the session.

### Cancellation of Forest School sessions

Following the Forest school ethos, Forest school in all weather's children are advised to dress warmly and have full waterproofs and wellies. However, there are some occasions when Forest school would have to be cancelled this may be due to many reasons, the weather or staff

#### Weather conditions

- In the case of the wind is too strong to be under the trees, which is checked regularly on the met office site or by looking at the site.
- In extreme heat we may stay under the shade, not moving around a lot, keep drinking and keep applying sun cream and wear a sun hat.
- If the weather is well below freezing it will be cancelled because the children don't move around enough to keep warm.
- Thunderstorms or hail it's not safe to take the children out.

#### Staff ratio's

- If we don't have enough staff to children sadly the session has to be cancelled.
- The ratio of adults for each session is at least two adults, one being the Forest school lead the other being a member of staff.
- If the forest school leader is ill or is away the session may have to be cancelled.

In all these situations we try to choose an alternative activity whether we stay on the field in the open or in the classroom and learn some nature skills or make animal kites. At least we are still learning about nature even if it's outdoor learning and not Forest school.

We try to give as much notice to supporting staff and parents as possible and in extreme circumstances the parents will be emailed on the day.

### Forest School Agreements

This is a list of agreed rules which we always discuss with the children before every Forest School session. It is emphasised this agreement is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children.

Walk within the forest school area

Do not put things in our mouths unless told it's safe to do so

Keep within the forest school area  
Only adults pick up and remove glass  
Look after plants, animals, birds, insects and fungi  
Walk around the outside of the fire circle  
Ask a friend to help carry large sticks/ logs  
No throwing  
Wash hands when we get back into class  
Tell an adult before going to and when you get back from the toilet  
Come back to the fire circle when you hear the owl whistle  
Line up at the gate when you hear the emergency whistle

### Tool use

Every time we take tools out to the Forest, firstly the forest school lead checks the tools are safe to use and that the relevant risk assessment is filled in.

\* The tools are then packed into an appropriate box for transport to the forest.

\* Next check it's the right tool for the task.

\* The forest school lead will then demonstrate how to use the tool correctly with safety gloves on and in a safe environment.

\* Making sure the child is standing still on level ground, not walking around. make sure the children have safety gloves on and are in a safe working area with space around them they may use the tool one to one with the forest school lead.

\* Once they have finished using the tool they are packed away safely and at the end of the session packed away for future use.

### Fire alarm and other emergencies

In the event of a fire alarm, the office staff will communicate with the staff member leading a forest school session by walkie talkie. Walkie talkies will be taken to all sessions in case the office need contacting in the event of an emergency. A red triangle system is also place in case emergency SLT assistance is required.

### Contribution of Forest School to teaching in other curriculum areas

Forest school is a 'Holbrook Halyard' and therefore is placed at the centre of our school's ethos and permeates all we do. Some examples include:

- **Design & Technology-** Den building, using tools and other materials to make things like medals, dream catchers and bow and arrows.
- **Math's** - making a tally chart of all the birds, insects, trees and plants in the forest school site. Working out the age of trees using math calculations.
- **Art-** Drawing the natural surroundings using different media's like chalks, pastels, colouring pencils and paints.
- **Science** – Carrying out different experiments such as wind, shadows soil layers and composting materials. Seed dispersal and learning different parts of plants and trees.

## **Entitlement – Forest School and inclusion**

We use our Forest School resource for all children. Forest School forms part of the school curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all children. Through our Forest School teaching we provide learning opportunities that enable all pupils to make good progress. We strive hard to meet the needs of those pupils with special educational needs, those with disabilities, those with special gifts and talents, and those learning English as an additional language, and we take all reasonable steps to achieve this. For further details see separate policies: Special Educational Needs (SEND); School Information Report; Disability Non-Discrimination and Access.

**Pupil Premium** is the Government grant given to schools to support its 'disadvantaged' pupils. These are children whose families are eligible for free school meals or have ever been eligible for free school meals during their time at Holbrook School. It is a statutory responsibility of all schools to publish on-line the level of Pupil Premium funding received, how the school has spent the Pupil Premium and the impact of the spending on learning outcomes for this group. This can be found on the school's website by selecting the 'Key Information' and 'Pupil Premium' tab.