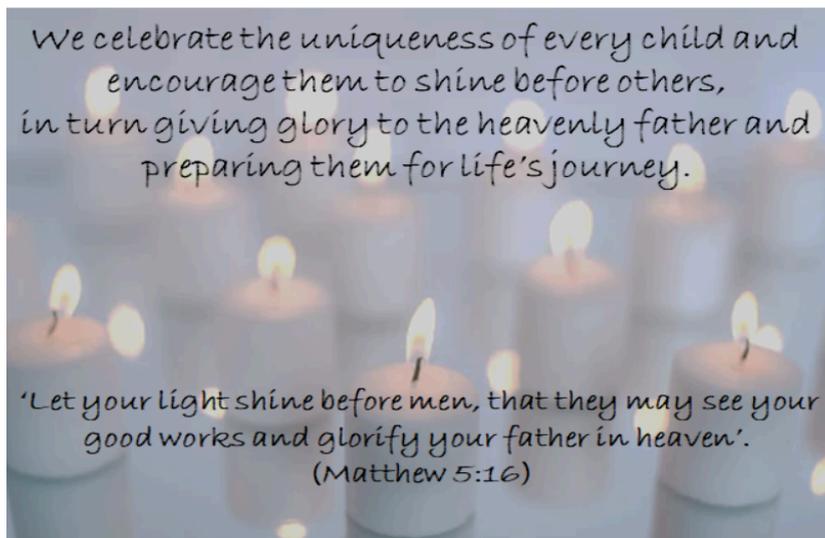


# Elveden C of E Primary Academy



## Our Forest School Handbook



'Let Your Light Shine before men, so they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven'

Matthew 5:16



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**Statement of Ownership**

This handbook was created by Mrs Maguire and Mrs Sanders throughout December 2019 to January 2020. This document will be reviewed and updated according to any changes that have to be made. These may be changes to the actual Forest School site or how the sessions may be run.

Information about school policy is taken directly from Elveden C of E Primary Academy website and relevant policies can be found here.

Our next review for our Forest School Handbook will be January 2026. However, if any changes occur before this time, this document will be updated and relevant amendments made and all staff will be asked to read the handbook again and signatory evidence will be obtained.

Forest Handbook created by:

Mrs Maguire .....

Mrs Sanders .....

## Introduction to Forest School

The Forest School movement originated in Denmark, where during observations at Forest Kindergartens, it was clear that the children who spent a sustained length of time outdoors thrived holistically. Outdoor observations carried out by knowledgeable practitioners, identified that whilst being outdoors all children explored their surroundings more inquisitively, played with their friends more positively and were confidently taking more risks outside whilst doing so. Therefore, it was evident to Kindergarten Professionals at this time that opportunities where children 'led' outdoor experiences were not only able to have a positive impact on their physical, social and emotional development, but on their wellbeing too.

Back in the UK, Forest School seems a fairly new idea, but in reality, it is based on the fundamentals of 'outdoor learning' that actually dates back to the 19th century. With Philosophers, naturalists and educators from the UK such as Wordsworth, Baden Powell, Leslie Paul (who founded the Woodcraft Folk in 1925), Susan Isaacs and the Macmillan sisters, all playing their part in laying the foundations to what is known as our Forest Schools today (Mel McCree, 2012). Their collaborative idea, that young children will develop enthusiasm for education through the appreciation of nature (if allowed to really experience the 'great' outdoors) highlighted to Forest School Leaders around the country the impact being outdoors has on pupils' confidence, behaviour and social skills.

At Elveden, Forest School means a lot more than just being 'outdoors'. As facilitators of learning, it's the perfect opportunity for us adults to create an irresistible atmosphere, where our children can not only develop their independence and self-esteem, but build a bank of memorable outdoor experiences that they can remember for life. Our Forest school site is situated away from the school grounds in a nearby woodland on the Elveden Farm Estate (See Site/Ecological Management plan). The site is owned by The Elveden Estate Farm and they have given us access to use this location for our weekly forest school sessions. We have a signed agreement with the Estate to lease this as an annual contract. We will renew this contract with the Estate annually (See Licensee Contract).

Our Forest School sessions are organised and delivered by our two passionate Forest School Leaders, Mrs Maguire and Miss Greenhill, who both have their Forest School First Aid award. These leaders are then supported by Class Teachers and our Voluntary Forest school Helpers (See Volunteer list). These committed Teachers plan their Forest School sessions to be totally inclusive for all and with our school's 5 clear aims and principles in mind.

Our Forest School Handbook is available for all parties to read, Staff, Forest School Helpers, Volunteers and School Governors.

## Our Forest School Aims and Principles

As a Church school, we have 6 Christian Values which are inextricably intertwined with Physical and Mental Wellbeing and the Personal Development of our children.

Our 6 Values are:

- **Hope:** be hopeful for their own development in their curiosity, being willing to learn from their mistakes and describe their progress.
- **Trust:** be trustworthy and show others they can be trusted to make good decisions and use resources carefully.
- **Respect:** be respectful of each other's ideas, thoughts and explanations.
- **Forgiveness:** be aware of how their words/actions can impact others when discussing their ideas and learning.
- **Friendship:** to build friendships with their peers, using social skills to communicate and interact with others.
- **Perseverance:** to continue to try their hardest even when things become tough, to learn from mistakes and not to give up.

The curriculum at Elveden C of E Primary Academy is designed to provide a broad and balanced education that is inclusive of the needs of all pupils and gives them the skills, knowledge and understanding to prepare them for life's journey. It ensures that academic success, as well as physical and mental development and health and well-being are key elements that support the development of the whole child and promote a positive attitude to learning, with an outdoor environment being the perfect setting to develop these. Furthermore, the aim of our curriculum is for our children to develop the necessary skills to be successful, independent and motivated learners in readiness for their next stage of education.

As a Christian family, we feel it is important that the curriculum prepares children for their future and builds on our key values of hope, trust, respect and forgiveness. The curriculum celebrates diversity and values all God's children with dignity. We encourage children to be confident and enthusiastic learners and enable them to take risks. We also believe that in whatever our children undertake in life, they all deserve a chance to 'Let Their Light Shine', and therefore the skills learnt outside are a great way to show this.

Within a climate of high expectation and challenge, all children are guided, supported and inspired to fulfil their true potential, emotionally, physically, spiritually and intellectually, both during their time at school and in their life ahead.

Our Forest School sessions provide a safe environment where all participants can acquire new skills in a woodland environment: they get to take risks, build resilience, make autonomous choices about their own learning and initiate free play with those around them.

Our sessions help our children to appreciate and respect their natural environment, whilst building a bank of valuable outdoor learning experiences where each one of them can truly shine. In addition to this, our Forest School sessions are inclusive as they encourage all learning styles and uncover 'multiple intelligences' in our children, which will allow them to develop holistically alongside each other.

## Health & Safety at Forest School

The Health and Safety Policy for Elveden C of E Primary Academy, sets out a clear statement of the schools' approach to the health and safety of the children, staff and visitors, whilst at the school. The following list is additional measures relating directly to our Forest School setting and its regular sessions:

- Every Forest School session will be run by a fully first trained Forest School Leader. There will be additional adults who are also First Aid trained; however the Forest School Leader will be the one to administer first aid if needed.
- 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.
- All Forest School helpers must read this handbook and appropriate risk assessments and understand/ comply with the general operating procedures for Forest Schools. These adults cannot join Forest School unless they have read and signed the handbook.
- The Forest School Leader or Forest School Helper will carry a well-stocked first aid kit and Emergency bag. This emergency bag will contain:

Forest School Emergency Kit First Aid kit  
Emergency procedures  
Medical information and emergency contact details of all in group  
Risk assessments  
Mobile phone  
Clean water  
Accident sheets  
Individual medication  
Blanket  
Wet wipes  
Tick remover  
Spare clothing  
Torch

- In addition to tools/resources suited to the planned activity, the Forest School leader will always take an emergency bag. The Forest School leader will always carry a mobile phone in case there is an emergency and will have all children's contact details on them within their emergency pack.
- In the event of an emergency, the Forest School leader will immediately ensure the school contacts the emergency services. If an ambulance is

needed, the Forest School Leader will send an adult helper to the site entrance to direct the paramedics to the injured party.

- The Forest School leader will review their risk assessments before every trip and also carry out a daily risk assessment prior to each visit. This is paramount to ensure that each time the site is visited it is safe and ready for the children.
- The Forest School Leader may undertake a dynamic risk assessment during a session. This will be recorded on the dynamic risk assessment record sheet and stored with other records back at school.
- Risk Assessment/Procedures for tools must be read by all adults prior to the Forest School Session. Whilst using tools the Adult/child ratio will always be 1:4. However, there is one exception to this rule- the use of small knives for stick whittling, when it will be 1:2.

## Equality and Inclusion at Forest School

Elveden C of E Primary Academy 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.

At Elveden, we celebrate the uniqueness of every child and encourage them to shine in all they do, building a memory bank of learning experiences which prepare them for life's journey' with our motto 'Let Your Light Shine' (Matthew 5:16) encompassing an inclusive approach under God's Guidance.

### **We aim to:**

- Provide a secure environment in which all children and adults can flourish and where all contributions are valued, especially the most vulnerable.
- Include and value the contribution that all families make to our understanding of Equality & Inclusion at both our school and Forest school setting.
- Provide non stereotypical information about different ethnic groups, including children or adults with SEND or other disabilities.
- Create an 'inclusive' thread that is interwoven throughout all we do at Forest school.
- Create an environment that is completely non-judgemental and model an innate behaviour and attitude that discriminates against no one.

## Safeguarding at Forest School

Elveden C of E Primary Academy School recognises its responsibilities for Safeguarding and for confidentiality. We understand that effective Safeguarding and Child Protection work requires sound procedures, excellent multi-agency cooperation and a workforce that is confident in responding to child protection situations quickly

and efficiently. A full copy our Safeguarding Policy is held in the school- below is a brief outline:

If a child makes a disclosure to any staff member during a Forest School session, this should be communicated to the Forest School Leader as soon as possible. Also appropriate recording of the concern must be written up objectively and immediately by the person whom the child disclosed to. This written information must be then given promptly to the Forest School Lead, who will follow the school's safeguarding procedure (see Record of concern about a child/young person's safety and welfare form). This is to record the safeguarding incident on CPOMS and then inform the DSL (Designated Safeguard Lead) at school. This communication will happen via phone call from the site.

### **Behaviour at Forest School**

At Forest School, our behaviour policy is mirrored in exactly the same it would be at school (See Behaviour Policy). We are passionate about the importance of positive reinforcement and praise when dealing with all types of behaviour in children. At Forest school, all learners are encouraged to follow our School Rules and are frequently praised for making the right choices. Any negative behaviour is dealt with quickly and effectively. If a child has made the wrong choice during a forest school activity, they are given a warning and a chance to redeem themselves. More often, this is enough to turn around their behaviour, so they can move on more positively. However, if a child is still behaving inappropriately or in a way that will cause harm to either themselves or others around them, then they will be immediately removed from the activity and given time out to reflect. After 5 minutes of reflection, and once the child makes the right choice, they will then be able to rejoin the group. However, if any behaviour becomes too challenging or dangerous, the Forest School Leader will make the decision to exclude that child immediately from the session. Forest School helpers are also in a position to carry out behaviour expectations from our school policy, as they too can also remind children to make the right choices and give warnings to those who do not. Any behaviour incidents with a child, where the Forest School helper has intervened to support that child to make the right choice, must be recorded after by them and given to the Forest leader immediately. This information will then be recorded on CPOMS back at school.

### **Risk Benefit Assessments at Forest School**

Risk Benefit management is an essential part of Forest School. All Forest School staff have a duty of care towards the children they are with. Not only are all adults responsible for keeping children safe, but they must also allow children to take some risk for themselves. During Forest School Sessions, it is vital that children are allowed

to manage their own risk, for example, when using sharp tools or climbing trees. However, risk assessments must be in place for these activities and all parties made aware of them. Forest School Risk Benefit assessments will be carried out before each session depending on what activity the group may wish to do. They will be reviewed annually. Before every session, a daily check will be made to ensure the area is deemed safe. In addition to this, any activity that requires a dynamic risk assessment, such as tree climbing, will be carried out 'in the moment', just before that activity takes place. A dynamic Risk Assessment is carried out by the Forest School leader only.

The risk assessment process is as follows:

- We look for hazards.
- We decided who may be harmed and how this injury may occur.
- We evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or if more should be done.
- We record our findings.
- We review our assessments and revise them if necessary.
- We inform all adults who accompany us.

Designated person responsibility:

Mrs Maguire - The Forest School Leader has been a member of Elveden Academy teaching staff for five years. She is the PE, PSHE and Mental Health lead as well as Lower Key Stage Two teacher. She also has Level 3 Forest School Paediatric First Aid.

Miss Greenhill - The Forest School Leader has been a member of Elveden Academy teaching staff for three years. She is the Early Years Teacher and SMSC, Collective Worship and I.C.T lead. She also has her Level 3 Forest School Paediatric First Aid.

### Lost or Missing Person Procedure at Forest School

At the beginning of every session, all children and staff are made aware of the Forest School Boundary. This safety procedure is carried out through a whole group activity, where we 'beat the bounds' together. All children are instructed to stay within eye sight of adults and the red safety bag at all times. The children are also informed that if they ever hear a sharp whistle blown three times, they come back immediately as this is an absolute emergency.

In the event of a suspected lost or missing person, the whistle blowing system will be followed and all children will be counted and the time noted. After that, a five minute interval is immediately timed by the Forest School Leader. The helpers and other staff will remain with the group and the leader will search the area. The School Office to be informed immediately by mobile phone and the police if necessary.

### **Parental Consent for Forest School**

All parents/carers are given an introductory letter to Forest Schools and also the opportunity to attend a parents evening about it. What's more, the Parents/carers are given a FS Leaflet, with a kit list of what children should wear for Forest School. Parents/carers have also completed the parental consent form for attendance at Forest School prior to sessions.

### **Use of Photographs at Forest School**

Parents/carers at Elveden C of E Primary Academy School have given their consent for photographs to be taken. There are only very few children who are not to be photographed. The Forest School Leaders will inform all adults who these children are. Within the Forest School kit bag, is a school ipad and this is available for all staff to use (including parent helpers) so that they can actively take 'in the moment' photos of the children enjoying the woodland. These photos will then be checked by the Forest School leader at the end of the sessions and uploaded to the school online platform to share with parents.

### **Cancellation Procedure for a timetabled session at Forest School**

In the event that a Forest School session will be cancelled, a daily site risk assessment will be conducted and in cases of severe weather where it is obvious that a session cannot take place, the forest school leader will cancel the sessions. This decision will only be made if absolutely necessary and only after they have liaised with the Head teacher. The children will then attend normal classes. If any extenuating circumstances arise as with regards to severe weather whilst at the site, the group will be brought back immediately, unless it is deemed unsafe to do so.

### **Toileting Procedure at Forest School**

All children are toileted before leaving the school building. If children need to use the toilet during Forest School sessions, they are allowed to go alone. The toilet site itself is within the forest school boundary and the children are reminded where it is at the start of each session and of the expectations of how to leave it. They are also reminded to use the washing facilities that are in the same area too. The toilet itself is a mobile facility and the waste is disposed of back at school after the session, by the forest school lead.

## Clothing & PPE at Forest School

Although risk assessments have been carried out for the Forest School Site, there may be times when the weather changes suddenly and for example the forest floor itself, may be wet and slippery at times. There is also a slight slope down into the woodland area at the site and although this will be gravelled, it may still be slippery if wet. Therefore it is vital that everyone using the site must wear suitable footwear. A pair of walking boots or wellies will keep feet dry and are safer to wear in these conditions. Furthermore, with Forest Schools taking place in most weather conditions, suitable clothing must be worn for the time of year.

All our parents were given an essential Forest School kit list before the session started and it is vital that the forest school leaders check children are suitable dressed for the activities. A spare bag of clothing will be taken with the emergency first aid bag, just in case.

The Forest Leader may also decide that on certain days, if visible is not great, that hi-vis jackets are worn by the younger or vulnerable children. The Forest School leader will also provide children with gloves if they are undertaking activities that involve clearing nettles and brambles and also if using certain tools. For example, it will be necessary for children to use gloves when using the bow saw, but tools such as Loppers are perfectly safe to use without gloves, as it is likely that in this case gloves would reduce the control of this type of tool.

### **Suitable clothing for 'cold and wet' weather consists of the following:**

Wellies or waterproof boots

Warm socks

Gloves, scarf and hat

Thermal under garments or extra layers

Waterproof trouser or salopettes

Warm, waterproof jacket

### **Suitable clothing for 'warm and dry' weather consists of the following:**

Long sleeved tops

Tracksuit bottoms or trousers (no jeans or shorts)

Fleece or outer layer

lightweight waterproof

Sun hat

Old Trainers or walking shoes

Suncream

## Tool Safety and Tool Operating Procedure at Forest School

The Forest School Leader is responsible for the safe usage and maintenance of all tools. These tools are always checked prior to use and counted back in at the end of each session. The usage and maintenance of all tools is outlined in our individual Tool Procedures. It is vital that all adults model safe and correct usage of tools and that gloves are provided for the activities that need them. This will be identified in the activity risk assessment. Risk assessments for the use of tools will always take place prior to working with tools and an appropriately safe area created for the tool tasks. The tools are stored in a padlocked box and carry bag. These items will be taken to the forest school site, if they are needed for an activity. A teacher or forest school helper will be asked to be responsible for the safe transportation of these items to and from the site. The toolbox and carry bag are normally placed on the storage cart and pulled by the adult.

Please see attached safety procedures for the tools we use at the forest school site. We use Loppers, Bow saws, small whittling knives and palm drills.

## Fire Protocol including Fire management/ Safety at Forest School

The Forest School Leader has established a safe area of the fire pit, although it has not been used yet. It is vital that correct fire protocol is carried out by all parties when starting the fire and the relevant fire safety risk assessment has been completed beforehand. There are many factors that must be taken into consideration when starting a fire during a forest school session:

- All children and staff must ensure they position themselves safely around the fire pit when it's in use.
- The Forest School leader will ensure the conditions are safe before preparing the fire site. For example, clearing any fallen branches or debris away from where the fire will be built.
- Forest leaders must ensure that there is at least 1.5m between the fire pit area and seating logs where the children will sit.
- The seating area will have an entry and exit point and children and staff will be reminded not to walk or run around this area. They will be reminded to use the exits only when entering and leaving the fire pit area.
- The Forest School Leader will ensure that the water bucket and fire blanket are available to extinguish the fire if needed.
- There will also be a fire blanket located on the nearest tree by the fire area.
- There will also be a bucket full of fresh water for immersing a burn, if this accident should happen.
- The Forest Leader to ensure that at all times the fire flame height is no higher than the level of their knee.
- The Forest School leader/helpers will ensure that the fire is put out properly and there is no trace left in the woodland.

### Camp Fire Cooking Procedure

All risks are assessed beforehand, if the camp fire is to be used to cook food. Food hygiene regulations will always be followed. Currently, both Forest School Leaders and other staff members have their Level 1 Food hygiene award, so are able to prepare and cook food and drink for the children. However, they must ensure all food hygiene procedures are undertaken before they prepare food, they must have antibacterial hand wash or soap and water for hand washing beforehand. All food that is prepared and cooked by the Forest School Leader/trained staff members, will be checked thoroughly before to check it is suitable for human consumption.

The camp fire itself will only be used to cook the following items: damper bread, pancakes and marshmallows. This source of heat will also be used to heat water for refreshments such as hot chocolate for the children. The Forest leader to ensure all children with long hair, tuck it in away before sitting near the campfire and also make sure clothing is fastened and no one has any cords or strings hanging that could dangle in the fire.

The Forest Leader must inform parents/carers of their planned activity, if it involves food items and gain permission for children to eat these. They will also make sure that any food allergies are noted and alternatives made available.

**Volunteer signing sheet for Forest School**

Please read our handbook and sign here. Please see the Forest School Leaders if you have any queries after doing so.

**Volunteers check list**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>DBS</u>	<u>Handbook Read</u>	<u>Signature</u>

## Insurance for Forest School

Elveden's Forest School Leaders and Staff are all insured to carry out Forest School activities on the Elveden Estate site providing all the risk assessments and procedures are adhered to. These documents will be updated if anything changes with the site and all parties will be informed.

Attached is the contract from the Elveden Estate, which shows Elveden School as the licensees. This contract is reviewed annually with both parties.

### Legislation

Forest School Leaders will ensure that all equipment involved in an accident or incident is retained in an unaltered condition in case it is required by any investigators. Furthermore, in a case of an accident, all carefully written records of this will be recorded, as will the facts, events and times relating to this incident/accident. If possible photos will be taken for evidence. All incidents/accidents will be recorded in the first aid log.

First aid kits to be replenished and checked every 6 months.