

# Kirklington Primary Forest School Handbook

Green  
Shoots  
Kirklington

## What is Forest School?

Forest School takes place in the outdoors. Although a session will have a lesson plan and learning objective in line with the National Curriculum, it can shift and change depending on where interests lie. We have such great outdoor space at Kirklington. We are working towards Eco School Status and are a John Muir school. Forest learning runs well alongside this and offers more opportunities to reach learning objectives outside the confines of a classroom. Forest School will encourage children to take responsibility for their planet and develop a respect for the natural world.

## Six Key principles of Forest School

1. Forest school is a long term, repetitive learning process that uses a natural outdoor space
2. It empowers children and young people to take responsibility for their own learning and development
3. Forest School promotes holistic, individualised learning and development
4. It encourages emotional growth, self-esteem, confidence and independence
5. Forest School is facilitated by a qualified Level 3 Forest school Practitioner
6. Forest School instils a deep respect and awareness for the natural world and reconnects participants to their environment

## Benefits of Forest School

**Physical health** Increased physical activity reduces the chance of obesity and increases bone density and increased oxygen levels from being outside can increase brain function

**Mental health** Spending time in green spaces reduces cortisol (a stress chemical) levels in the brain and therefore has a calming influence. The reduction in cortisol also increases receptivity for building neural pathways (learning) in the brain

**Social** Playing outside can help to develop communication, team building, collaborative working and language skills

**Risk awareness** Playing outside allows children to learn about risk assessment and risk taking. Children that are exposed to acceptable levels of risk at a young age are less likely to make bad judgements in the future and resilience can be developed alongside risk tasking and problem solving

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**Behaviour** Due to the calming effect on the brain and the increase in physical space outside, improved behaviour is often noticed, giving some children chance to excel when inside the classroom it's very hard for them

## Child Led Learning

Forest Schools aims to be child led and enables children to develop their independent learning skills at their own pace through their own interests. In forest school, there is a natural shift that occurs from the initial, adult led tasks through to children steering the direction and flow of a session as their knowledge and confidence grows and they become more efficient at self-risk assessing.

## Accessible for all

A group of children move onto the next task only when all are finished. This creates a sense of community developing and deeper understanding, not simply moving onwards and upwards. Small and achievable tasks are key, whereby the process is key not necessarily the end result. We can re-visit and re-learn until the learners become confident, only then will we move on as a group.

The Instagram page shows photos of our learning

@learn.play.grow\_kirklington

## Why is risk-taking within Forest School important?

Forest School Leaders encourage the children to take responsibility for themselves and this brings with it a level of risk, which is important to a child's development and growing resilience. This risk is managed by the Leader, but the children are encouraged to self-evaluate and self-risk assess. A risk/benefit assessment for each planned activity is a good way to decide if it should go ahead.

Risky Activity	Benefits to proposed risky activity	How to enable a safer space
Climbing Trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Core muscle strength</li> <li>Problem solving</li> <li>Self-assurance/self-belief and confidence</li> <li>Resilience and stamina</li> <li>Self-risk management</li> <li>Communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-session safety checks</li> <li>Check correct clothing</li> <li>Small 1:1 ratio for initial climb</li> <li>Use effective language, 'climb as high as you like, but stay within my reach'</li> <li>Encourage teamwork</li> </ul>

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## Kirklington Forest School Green Code

- We always try to be kind to each other and look after each other
- We look after our tools and equipment
- We look after trees, plants and animals
- We are sensible with tools and fire and follow the rules carefully
- We look after ourselves and clean our hands after touching plants or animals, after going to the toilet or before having our snack
- We don't put anything in our mouths- no picking/no licking!
- We are careful when we play with sticks and know the rules about when to drag or carry a stick
- We always come back when we hear "1, 2, 3 Come back to me"
- If the whistle is blown three times, there is an emergency and everyone must gather together immediately
- We never leave a boundary without a grown up



## What sort of activities do the children do?

Activities are linked to topic the children are learning during term time and are planned alongside the class teacher. The aim is to enrich learning in class and offer more opportunities for a deeper understanding. Typically, these may include:

**Music** Keeping a pulse or copying a rhythm pattern by beating sticks together, learning songs and singing as a group. Making musical instruments such as shakers and whistles

**Physical Development** Use of tools such as a peeler as prequel to a whittling sheath knife or through practice at tying a knot

**Design Technology and Science** Building dens and bridges that are suitable to sit in and walk on, whittling wood, making wooden disks. Observation of the natural environment- growth and decay - noticing patterns, change and collection of data through collection of natural objects

**Literacy & Reading** Story telling, mark making and creative writing, following instructions and creating story maps with natural objects such as story stones and mud painting.

**Maths** Data handling, Measuring, Shapes, size ordering of natural objects and predictions and problem solving- knot tying, den building

**Art** Creating 3D pictures or sculptures out of clay or mud, colour matching and making our own charcoal to draw with!

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development** Resilience through making an obstacle course, empathy and self-confidence through a team activity such as putting up a hammock or building a bridge that works

**ICT** Taking photos and videos, using iPads to research the flora and fauna and walkie talkie use to communicate with another group on a treasure hunt or while orienteering

All policies and risk assessments can be seen by emailing into school to ask [office@kirklington.notts.sch.uk](mailto:office@kirklington.notts.sch.uk) Phone: **01636 812360**

