



Hummersea Primary School

Forest School Policy

September 2024

Purpose:

This policy outlines the principles, goals, and operational procedures for the Forest School program at Hummersea Primary School. It is designed to ensure the safe, inclusive, and effective delivery of outdoor learning experiences for all pupils, promoting their holistic development and fostering a connection with nature.

1. Vision and Aims

At Hummersea Primary, our Forest School aims to provide children with regular, hands-on learning experiences in a natural outdoor environment, encouraging physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth. Through child-led exploration and play, we aim to:

- Develop confidence, self-esteem, and resilience.
- Encourage independent thinking, problem-solving, and creativity.
- Promote physical health, well-being, and environmental stewardship.
- Foster social skills, teamwork, and communication.
- Support academic achievement through experiential, cross-curricular learning.

2. Principles of Forest School

Forest School at Hummersea is based on the following core principles:

- **Child-Centered Learning:** The program is designed to be child-led, allowing pupils to explore, discover, and learn at their own pace, supported by skilled facilitators.
- **Regular and Long-Term Access:** Forest School sessions will be delivered regularly (biweekly), providing ongoing opportunities for children to build confidence and skills.
- **Holistic Development:** Forest School focuses on the holistic development of each child, including physical, emotional, social, and intellectual growth.
- **Risk and Challenge:** Pupils are encouraged to take calculated risks, guided by staff, to build resilience, confidence, and responsibility.
- **Connection to Nature:** Pupils will develop a strong connection to nature, understanding its importance and learning to care for the environment.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Headteacher:

- Ensure the overall implementation of the Forest School policy.
- Allocate resources and support for the development of the Forest School program.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the program.

Forest School Leader:

- Must be a qualified Forest School practitioner (Level 3 or higher).
- Plan and deliver safe, engaging, and age-appropriate Forest School sessions.
- Conduct regular risk assessments for the site and activities.
- Ensure that equipment and materials are safe and maintained.
- Communicate with staff, pupils, and parents about the goals and activities of the Forest School.

Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants:

- Support the Forest School leader in facilitating activities.
- Help monitor children's safety and well-being during sessions.
- Encourage pupils to engage fully and reflect on their experiences.

Pupils:

- Follow safety guidelines and respect the natural environment.
- Participate actively and positively in all Forest School activities.

Parents/Guardians:

- Ensure their child has appropriate clothing and footwear for outdoor learning (e.g., old clothing, sturdy shoes).
- Support the school's efforts to promote outdoor learning and environmental awareness.

4. Safeguarding and Health & Safety

At Hummersea Primary, the safety and well-being of all participants in Forest School are paramount. The following procedures are in place to ensure a safe environment:

Risk Assessments:

- A comprehensive risk assessment will be carried out by the Forest School leader before each session, considering the environment, activities, and individual needs of pupils.
- Risk assessments will be regularly reviewed and updated, taking into account any changes to the site or activities.

First Aid:

- At least one member of staff attending each session will hold an appropriate First Aid qualification.
- A first aid kit and mobile phone will be taken to each session.

Clothing and Equipment:

- Pupils must wear appropriate outdoor clothing, including waterproof jackets, boots, and warm layers when necessary. School aims to provide waterproof clothing and wellies for children who need them. Children are able to bring their own in from home if they prefer. Parents are asked to provide some old clothing for if children need to get changed. These will remain in school during the half term and then sent home to be washed. Some items may need washing before the end of the half term and this will be communicated to parents/carers by the class teacher or teaching assistant. Parents/carers will be informed in advance of any special requirements.
- The Forest School leader will ensure that all tools and equipment (e.g., for fire-lighting or using tools) are safe, age-appropriate, and well-maintained.
- Safe tool use will be taught and supervised at all times.

Weather Conditions:

- Sessions will take place in all weather conditions, except in cases of severe weather (e.g., storms, high winds). In such cases, the session may be postponed or moved indoors.
- The Forest School leader will monitor weather forecasts and adapt plans as necessary.

Supervision and Ratios:

- A suitable adult-to-child ratio will be maintained during all sessions (typically 1:8 for younger children or higher for more adventurous activities).
- Volunteers, teaching assistants, or parent helpers may assist under the guidance of the Forest School leader.

Boundaries and Rules:

- Clear physical boundaries of the Forest School site will be established and explained to the children.
- Pupils will be reminded regularly of safety rules, including respect for the natural environment, safe tool use, and appropriate behaviour near water or fire.

5. Inclusion and Accessibility

Forest School at Hummersea Primary is committed to being inclusive and accessible to all pupils:

- **Differentiated Activities:** Forest School sessions will be planned to cater to a range of abilities and learning needs, ensuring all children can participate meaningfully.
- **Support for SEND Pupils:** The Forest School leader will work closely with the SEND coordinator and class teachers to ensure pupils with additional needs are fully supported during sessions, with adapted activities and equipment as needed.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** The program will respect and reflect the cultural backgrounds and beliefs of all pupils, ensuring the content is inclusive and sensitive.

6. Curriculum Integration and Learning Outcomes

Forest School sessions will support the National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework by offering practical, real-world learning opportunities across various subjects:

- **Science:** Pupils will explore plant and animal life, ecosystems, and natural materials. The Forest School Lead and Science Lead work closely to plan cross-curricular links for practical, hands on scientific learning.
- **Maths:** Children will engage in activities that promote mathematical thinking, such as measuring, estimating, and counting.

- **Literacy:** Sessions will include storytelling, creative writing, and discussions inspired by nature.
- **Physical Development:** Pupils will improve gross and fine motor skills through climbing, building, and using tools.
- **Personal, Social, and Emotional Development (PSED):** Forest School will promote teamwork, resilience, and problem-solving, fostering emotional well-being and social skills.

Learning outcomes will focus on children's holistic development, including increased confidence, independence, curiosity, and environmental awareness.

7. Parental Involvement and Communication

- **Parent Workshops:** The school will offer workshops and information sessions to explain the benefits of Forest School and how parents can support their child's learning outdoors.
- **Regular Updates:** Parents will receive regular updates on Forest School activities through newsletters, school websites, or parent consultations
- **Parent Volunteers:** Opportunities for parents to participate in sessions as volunteers will be available, subject to DBS checks and safeguarding protocols.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Continuous Assessment:** The Forest School leader will monitor pupils' engagement and development throughout the program. Feedback from pupils, staff, and parents will be gathered regularly to assess the impact.
- **Annual Review:** The program will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective, safe, and aligned with the school's overall vision and goals.
- **CPD for Staff:** Staff will be encouraged to undertake ongoing professional development to enhance the delivery of Forest School, including regular training and sharing of best practices.

9. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if necessary, to ensure it reflects the best practice and any changes in guidelines or school priorities.

Approved by: Mrs J. Parncutt

Position: Chair of Governors

Next Review Date:

September 2025

This **Forest School Policy** ensures that outdoor learning is delivered safely, inclusively, and effectively at Hummersea Primary helping children develop vital life skills, a love for nature, and the confidence to take on new challenges.