

Portishead Primary School

Forest School Sessions

Handbook



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Skills progression
3. Site information
4. Forest School activities
5. Environmental policy
6. Health and safety policy
7. Health and safety procedures
8. Insurance
9. First Aid
10. Emergency plan
11. Risk management Policy
12. Using tools
13. Using fire
14. Safeguarding and inclusion policy
15. Learning and development
16. Communication and reflection
17. Session routine and procedures

1.

Portishead Primary Forest School Sessions

Portishead Primary Forest School sessions will be run within East Wood, Portishead. The following handbook has been developed by Jess Wallace, Forest School Level 3 lead, and will be reviewed annually or when the need arises.

Intent.

At Portishead Primary we have expanded and enhanced the breadth of our curriculum by incorporating a designated outdoor learning and Forest School area that will become part of our weekly routine for KS1 and a set of 5/6 six sessions per class in KS2.

The primary aims of this provision will be:

- To build self-esteem and confidence in children.
- To build resilient, determined and independent learners
- To develop children's personal, social and emotional development.
- To develop and encourage creativity
- To encourage collaboration and teamwork
- To develop and build the ideas of risk management and risk benefit
- To improve children's life skills and experiences
- To enable children to gain a respect for the natural environment and wildlife.

These aims will be covered with a variety of Forest Schools sessions over the learner's primary education. In KS1 these will be a mixture of learning through play and structured activities. This will develop in KS2 into further opportunities to expand children's outdoor experiences and work more independently within the risk/benefit structure.

Implementation

Forest school sessions are timetabled for one afternoon a week in alternate terms for KS1 and are carried out in a rolling program across the year for KS2. All sessions are 2 hours long and held in our forest school area on the school grounds. There may be opportunities to go off site and we are working alongside our Eco Committee to allow some members to take part in community projects. We are also continually developing our outdoor space and the use of the rest of the outdoor areas available to us at Portishead Primary.

Due to its child led nature and focus on social development, Forest School engages children in a manner that is hard to imitate in the classroom. This creates new opportunities for learning and development that might not be accessed during regular day-to-day schooling.

Impact

Through Forest School sessions we aim to provide a holistic learning approach which develops the whole child as an individual. Forest School should give the learner the opportunity to develop social and emotional skills, give them chance to follow their own interests and develop and interest and sense guardianship of the world around them. Due to the child led nature of the Forest School ethos children are not assessed formally, however, they are encouraged to partake in a wide range of

experiences and challenge themselves. We are developing a ‘Green Passport’ for children to record some of their outdoor and Forest School experiences as they move through the school.

2.

Forest School Skills Progression

Year group	Tools	Cooking	Team work	Knots	Community/seasonal	Social/Emotional
EYFS	Mallets 1:1 Golf tees into veg	Experiencing a fire Cooking on a stick 1:1 Fire safety	Take part in a group game Group den building	Weaving	The seasons/scavenger hunts Local wildlife/plants	Role play/mud kitchen Small world imagination Risk assessing Emotional literacy
1	Mallets 1:1 Golf tees into veg	Cooking on a stick 1:2 Fire safety	Take part in a group game Group den building	Stop knots Square lashing	The seasons/scavenger hunts Local wildlife/plants	Role play/mud kitchen Small world imagination Risk assessing Emotional literacy
	Sawing with bow saw 1:1					
	Hammer and nails 1:1					
2	Mallets independently Golf tees into veg	Cooking on a stick 1:2 Fire safety	Take part in a group game Group den building	Stop knots Square lashing	The seasons/scavenger hunts Local wildlife/plants	Role play/mud kitchen Small world imagination Risk assessing Emotional literacy
	Sawing with bow saw 1:1					
	Hammer and nails 1:1					
3	Drilling	Marshmallows Stew – no prep Lighting cotton wool with flint and steel Fire safety Fire triangle	Games Sharing resources	Reef knot Overhand knot	Hedgehog street	Working as a team Learning with someone different Feedback and development

4	Using mallets for Hapa Zome Trowels for planting	Food prep Cooking on a stick Lighting cotton wool with flint and steel Fire safety Fire triangle	Team games	Reef knot Overhand knot	Planting around the school.	Developing independence for tasks Teamwork and negotiation Resilience and persevering Feedback and development
5	Whittling with a veg peeler	Food Prep Lighting and cooking on own fire Fire safety Fire triangle	Team building games – cross the river	Reef Knot Lashing	Wildlife corridors	Developing independence for tasks Teamwork and negotiation Resilience and persevering Feedback and development
6	Hammer and nail art Drilling to make bird feeders	Building own fires and cooking on a grill Cooking on a stick on group fires Fire safety Fire triangle	Team building Towers Lighting fires	Lashing Clove hitch Reef knot	Wassail/Christmas	Developing independence for tasks Teamwork and negotiation Resilience and persevering Feedback and development

3.

Site Information

The site is a fenced off area within the school grounds. Forest School sessions may also explore other parts of the school site as well. The toilets used during sessions will either be the year group toilets or the toilets in the portacabins next to the forest school site.

4.

Activities at Portishead Primary Forest School

The following list indicates the types of activities that may regularly be undertaken at Portishead Primary Forest School.

Games – team building and other games 1 2 3 where are you Camouflage Bees and flowers Stuck in the mud, shadow tag, spider web tag Mindfulness and relaxation	Music... Listening to the sounds we can hear Making a natural shaker Music wall Water play Water wall Water plants
Art... Colour matching Make a group picture Mud painting Hammer leaves on cotton, hapazome Make natural paintbrushes and natural paint Make crowns, necklaces, stick men, kites Weaving Painting stones	Animals... Nature hunt Make an animal home with sticks/leaves etc Make stick fairies/monsters, log dogs Make our own dens/teepee/shelter ID charts, magnifiers for observing Bird feeders, butterfly feeders Create environments, bug hotel, pond area, so that children can observe creatures
Clay and mud play... Make imprints with leaves Make clay insects or animals Tree faces Digging in mud Planting and gardening Knot tying..... Teach knots e.g. stop knot, half hitch, square lash	Tools... Sawing wood (bow saw or folding saw) Drilling using hand drill e.g. through wooden disk or conker to make a necklace Hammering using mallets Use secateurs or gardening tools Stories - stick man, bog baby, leaf man, life cycle stories, grandfather stone

Pretend play...	Fire... Understand how to light/extinguish a fire
Mud kitchens	Popcorn
Cuddly toy animals	Toasting – marshmallows, bread, brioche, crumpets, apples
Den building	Cook bread twists on a stick
Small piece building with animals/dinosaurs	Bake in foil – pizza, cheese toastie,
Fairy houses	Fry – doughnuts, drop scones
	Boil – water, (hot drinks), soup

5.

Environmental Policy

In order that Portishead Primary Forest School sessions do not have an adverse environmental impact on our site our mantra is ‘leave only footprints, take only memories’

Many of the activities above will not have a very big environmental impact on our site except for the movement of the children and adults. They will be encouraged to step carefully and not to trample plants and to only pick one or two leaves or parts of a plant if that is required for an activity.

Some of the activities undertaken will require specific thought as to how to limit their environmental impact. The table below details this and how to reduce our impact:

Activity	Impact	Mitigation
General exploration of the site by a large group	The general footfall of many people over the same area can damage the plants, and sometimes root systems, of the plants growing there.	Encourage everyone to use paths to get from area to area. Encourage people not to trample plants where possible. Set up activities in different areas each session to limit the footfall.
Picking plants	Plant can be easily damaged if parts of them are picked and some may not recover and regrow.	Limit the number of activities that require plants to be picked. Encourage everyone to pick parts of plants that have already fallen to the ground.
Eating snack	Rubbish, both inorganic and organic, can impact the area. Inorganic rubbish can be dangerous to animals and insects and food waste can encourage animals to congregate in one area possibly affecting other species that are already there.	Make sure all rubbish is put in the bin.
Minibeast hunting	Disturbing and moving minibeasts from their homes	Only take one example of each to be looked at. Handle them

	can have an impact on them and their lives!	carefully. Replace them where you found them, or at least a habitat very much like where you found them. i.e. under some bark.
Making shelters	Making shelters requires natural materials to be collected and moved around. Leaving the shelters up can alter the environment for other users of the site.	Collect only fallen wood and materials for making shelters where possible. Take down shelters at the end of the session to return the site to how it was found.
Collecting firewood	Collecting dead wood for fires can reduce the number of available habitats for many species.	Make sure there is an abundance of wood before collecting. If there is not enough, do not have a fire.
Lighting a fire	A fire can spread and can damage the ground it is lit upon.	Only light a fire in a raised fire pit. Extinguish fully.
Using clay and other brought in materials	Leaving materials in the woodland that were not found there can have an impact on the wildlife and the Flora and Fauna.	Encourage participants to tidy away after themselves and make sure all 'alien' materials are taken out of the forest school area after the sessions.
Toileting	Use the year groups own toilet or portacabin toilets depending on which is closer. Children must ask before leaving the site. An adult will then keep an eye on them from a distance.	Make sure all participants go to the loo before they come to forest school.

6.

Health and Safety Policy

Portishead Primary Forest School sessions aim to encourage the taking of appropriate risk based on a risk/benefit analysis of planned and learner-initiated activities.

Allowing learners to experience appropriate risk is part of the Forest School ethos. Learning to identify and manage their own risks is an important developmental step and Portishead Primary Forest School sessions aim to provide a safe environment in which appropriate risks can be taken.

The Forest School Leader is responsible for risk assessing all Forest School activities and ensuring the following policy is carried through:

- Carrying out a site risk assessment prior to each sessions to identify, reduce the risk from and make clear any potential hazards on site.

- Risk assess each planned session activity to ensure it is safe to do based on knowledge of the learners.
- Decide based on the weather as to whether the site is safe to use.
- Inform the assistants and the children of any hazards that are on site or present during activities.
- Ensure there is an emergency procedure that is known by the leaders and accessible to the parents and helpers.
- Make clear that children are not to put anything from the forest into their mouths unless it is the snack the leaders or their teachers have provided.
- Ensuring there is fresh water for drinking and washing hands on site.
- Continually reassess the health and safety procedures to ensure they are a dynamic document that remains relevant.

7.

Health and Safety Procedures:

Activity	Health and Safety Procedure to be followed
Setting Boundaries	Boundaries will be set by the forest school leader prior to each session. Children will be reminded of boundaries, the return signal and to ask an adult before leaving the site for the toilet.
General Activities	<p>Sticks – children may play with sticks but should choose ones shorter than their arm to carry. They should not run with them and should point them towards the floor. Longer sticks should be dragged along the ground.</p> <p>Stones – Stones can be used but must not be thrown.</p> <p>Climbing – children are allowed to climb but teachers and children should check the wood they are climbing first to make sure it is stable and should not climb higher than their own height.</p> <p>Ropes/string – use of ropes and string should be supervised by an adult</p> <p>Moving items – thought should be put into how an item is moved safely with consideration of others around them and the impact it might have on the environment. Heavy items will need several pairs of hands or to be rolled.</p>
Food Hygiene & Eating	Only food provided by teachers or the children's snack from home should be consumed. All other items should be kept out of the mouth. Water and soap should be provided for hand washing before eating.

Weather	<p>Rain – an appropriate tarp shelter should be put up to provide a dry area if it rains.</p> <p>Sun/heat – children will be encouraged to shelter under denser tree cover drink plenty of water in hot weather.</p> <p>Wind- in low winds extra care should be taken to check overhanging branches that might be coming lose. Forest School will be moved indoors in very high winds.</p> <p>Lightning – If a lightning storm is forecast forest school session will be moved indoors</p>
Clothing	Parents should be advised on appropriate clothing. Layers that can be easily removed will be encouraged and waterproofs asked for in wet weather
Lost or missing group member	If a member of the group goes missing a short search should be made by the Forest School Leader or teacher. The rest of the group should stay in a designated safe area and read a story or play a quiet game. If the person is not found after ten minutes search the police must be called and the session ended.
Toileting	Children must use the toilet before coming to Forest School. They can use the closest toilets at school but must ask an adult first.
Emergency whistle, fire alarm and lock down	Children will be taught the emergency whistle, 3 short blasts on the whistle, they line up silently when they hear this sound. The procedure is then the same as for fire alarm or lock down, the group will be taken silently to the closest safe place.
Poisonous/dangerous plants & fungi & biting/stinging insects.	Everyone is discouraged from putting anything into their mouths at Forest school and will be instructed to look but not touch at anything that is a fungi or a berry. Participants will be encouraged to stay calm in the presence of stinging insects.
Administering medicines,	The Forest School Leader and Teaching Assistants are all first aid trained and will administer first aid in line with the school's policy.

8.

Insurance

Covered by school's public liability insurance.

9.

First Aid

The Forest School leader and Teaching Assistants all hold valid First Aid qualifications. A first aid bag containing a first aid kit, emergency blanket, sugary snack, whistle and emergency plan should always be taken to the site.

The first aid kit includes:

1 x Triangular Bandage
1 x Vinyl Gloves
1 x Medium Dressing with flow wrap
4 x Conforming Bandages
1 x Emergency Foil / Thermal Blanket
6 x Sterile wound cleansing wipes (Alcohol Free)
20 x Wash proof Plasters
1 x Blunt First Aid Scissors
Burns gel
Bite/sting cream

10.

Emergency and serious incident plan

In the event of a serious incident that cannot be treated by the onsite first aiders the following procedure should be followed:

- Administer first aid – check A-B-C and put into recovery position if necessary.
- Remove the rest of the group, with their adults to a safe distance and give them a quiet activity to keep them calm. If the injured person is a child keep their adult with them.
- Call the relevant emergency services – see contact details below
- Contact School to gain help, advice and for them to contact parents/emergency contact.
- Either the forest school leader or the assistant should walk up to the road or office to meet the ambulance crew
- If the injured person is taken to hospital and is an adult either the forest school leader or assistant should accompany them.
- The session should be ended

Emergency details:

Requesting attendance by Emergency Services (Ambulance)

Send one member of staff to the office to ask them to dial 999 and ask for an ambulance.

11.

Risk management Policy

Risk management is a process during which potential risk is predicted and forecast, it is decided whether the benefit of taking risk outweighs the hazards and actions are put into place to mitigate the outcomes.

The Forest School ethos strongly encourages letting participants take appropriate risks and, over time, allowing participants to self-regulate their own actions. It is important that the group is made aware, from the first session, and throughout subsequent sessions of the risks identified by the leaders for any planned activity and the site in general.

- Before each session the planned activities must be risk assessed by the Forest School leader.
- The site must be cleared of any hazards before the session by the Forest School leaders
- The participants must be made aware of the risks present i.e. trip hazards, boundaries and risks introduced through planned activities.
- The participants should be encouraged to consider their own actions, make their own choices and take their own risks as long as another person does not consider it a considerable risk.
- If significant or notable risks are taken by individuals during the session these should be discussed with the individual and, where appropriate, with the group in order to highlight the risks taken and how injury or negative consequence was or could have been avoided.
- The sessions should be responsive to the participants, their behaviour and other circumstances such as members of the public, weather and wildlife.
- It is the responsibility of the Forest School leader to assess the risks being taken throughout the sessions and mitigate any significant negative impacts as soon as viable.

See sections 6 and 7 for health and safety policy and procedures

See sections 12 and 13 for tool and fire use policies

See section 17 for session routine and procedures

12.

Tools and Equipment

The tools that may be used during a Forest School Session include:

vegetable peelers
mallet
bow saw
hand drill
brace and bit

It is the Forest School leaders' responsibility to ensure the following general tool use guidelines are followed:

- The tools must be counted in and out within the sessions
- The tools must be stored in appropriate, safe tool box
- The tools must be maintained in good working order
- The learners must be taught how to handle and use the tools effectively and safely before they touch them
- There must be a 1:1 adult to child ratio at all times whilst children are using tools

The following guidelines relate to each tool that may be used:

Tool	Safety Equipment	User instructions	Storage
Vegetable peeler	Mat to cut onto	The learner should be shown how to peel away from themselves in a downward motion onto a mat placed on a flat, stable surface. They should not be allowed to touch the blade or pick bits out if they get stuck.	Count out and in into the tool box. Store with mats.
Mallet	Small stick	The object being bashed by the mallet must be secured by tape or gravity to a surface. Put both hands on the mallet. Never lift out of eye line. Use a small stick to hold the fabric still rather than a finger.	Count out and into the tool box
Bow saw	Gloves Saw horse	Secure item being sawn with a clamp or on a saw horse. An adult may help hold it steady with their hands well away from the cutting line. Children	Store with the blade cover on in a tool box

		to wear a glove on the hand not holding the saw.	
Hand drill & brace and bit	Clamp or tape if needed	The item being drilled must be secured with tape, a clamp, gravity or a careful adult's hand onto a stable surface. A pilot hole may be drilled first by and adult to prevent slippage.	Store in the tool box

13.

Fire

A fire may be lit at Portishead Primary Forest School Sessions once it has been established that the group are able to follow instructions well and will be calm in a potentially new situation.

The following ground rules must be established before a fire is lit:

- The fire is to be lit within a raised fire pit.
- The fire pit should not be placed under low hanging foliage or branches
- A fire should not be lit in windy conditions where flames may be blown unexpectedly.
- A fire circle, at least 1.5m from the fire pit, must be established.
- The group may sit at the fire circle but only come in towards the fire when invited by the Forest School leader or assistant.
- Everyone must walk, not run, near the fire.
- Everyone should step outside of the fire circle in order to move around the fire unless they have been invited up to the fire.
- At the fire learners should kneel on one knee in order to be able to stand up quickly in an emergency.
- The group will be encouraged to move away safely from heavy smoke.
- The fire must be extinguished if the group cannot follow appropriate instructions or are acting dangerously.
- The fire must always be attended by an adult.
- The fire must be fully extinguished at the end of the session and the ashes scattered once they are cool.

Additional equipment needed for a fire:

- fire pit
- cotton wool and Vaseline
- fire striker
- fireproof gloves
- water
- fire blanket and burns kit

14.

Safeguarding vulnerable groups policies and procedures

Portishead Primary Forest School sessions aim to provide a safe stimulating environment for all the learners who join in.

The sessions as inclusive as possible.

Working ratios of staff involved: Each session will have the Forest School leader, the class teacher and teaching assistant as a minimum. The ratios required for an off-school site trip are as follows:

1 adult for every 6 pupils in school years 1 to 3

1 adult for every 10-15 pupils in school years 4 to 6;

For onsite forest school sessions, we will aim to have a ratio of at least 1 staff to 10 children.

Parent helpers will be asked for to help maintain a high adult to child ratio.

Disclosure policy: If a child or adult discloses information to either Forest School leader whilst on the Forest school sessions that may raise child or adult protection issues they will be believed. It will be made clear that no secrets can be kept and the discloser will be asked to talk about the issue further to gain clearer details if they wish to. If it seems that a child or adult protection issue is at the root of the problem a school-based safeguarding officer will be informed immediately on return to school.

Anti-bullying and behaviour policy: All participants in the Portishead Primary Forest School sessions will be expected to maintain courteous, polite and safe behaviour standards. Bullying and unsafe behaviour will not be tolerated. The school behaviour and bullying policies will be followed. Safe practice of using natural resources and tools will be shared with the group during the appropriate session. The whole group will be expected to adhere to these safe practices and may be asked to stop their activity, or leave the group in severe cases, if they behave in an unsafe manner.

If a child is behaving in an unsafe way their class teacher will be the first port of call for helping diffuse the situation. The rest of the group will be moved away to a safe distance. If the class teacher cannot diffuse the situation a Forest School leader will try and talk the child down and diffuse the situation.

Photography policy: As part of Portishead Primary Forest School sessions some photographs may be taken that include the children and the adults. They must be taken on school iPad and saved and shared only on the school network unless other permissions have been sought.

15.

Learning and Development in our Forest School

At Portishead Primary Forest School sessions, the aim is to adhere to the Forest School ethos of providing a rich natural environment in which learners are encouraged to explore, discover, ask questions, take risks, increase their self-esteem and enjoy a learner led holistic outdoor experience.

We hope that positive outdoor experiences will help harbour future interest in enjoying and looking after the environment around us and having positive personal relationships with the outdoors which in turn will help create a physically and mentally enriched person.

As our group is newly formed and are very young some structure will be given to the group in order to create routine and stability. Activities will be demonstrated by a forest school leader to the group. The children are then able to interpret the activities in whatever way they like, there is no correct way to make a den for a cuddly toy or a music shaker from natural materials. Leaders and the school adults will be encouraged to let the learners explore their surroundings, make up their own games, play with each other or alone and gain some independence as the sessions progress.

16.

Communication and reflection:

Planning of the sessions is primarily carried out by the Forest School leader but will be saved on the Teachers Shared drive for teachers to access.

During and at the close of each session all participants will be asked to reflect on what they have enjoyed, anything they have learnt and what they might like to try next. These reflections will be considered when putting the detail into the next session's planning.

An evaluation conversation will take place between the Forest School leader and the teacher after each session to reflect on what went well, what was enjoyed, what could be improved and which direction the group could be taken in next session.

17.

Session Routines & Procedures

Before we go:

Action	Person Responsible
Make sure the session is planned and risk/benefit assessed	J Wallace/C Watkins
Check the weather and inform the parents/carers via Facebook. Advise on clothing	J Wallace/C Watkins
Check the equipment needed for the session is all there	J Wallace/C Watkins
Check first aid kit is fully stocked and emergency details and emergency plan are packed	J Wallace/C Watkins
Talk to the class about Forest School	J Wallace/C Watkins

On the Day:

Action	Person Responsible
Risk assess and set up the site.	J Wallace/C Watkins
Set up all equipment and remove any rubbish	J Wallace/C Watkins
Meet group in class	J Wallace/C Watkins
Walk the group to the Forest School site	J Wallace/C Watkins

Have an opening circle – introductions/session outline/reinforce boundaries	J Wallace/C Watkins
Ice breaker game to relax everyone and reinforce boundaries	J Wallace/C Watkins
Activity – ensure correct usage of tools and PPE if required	J Wallace/C Watkins
Free play – ensure needs of group are met and play is safe	J Wallace/C Watkins/adults
Snack – ensure hand washing before snack	J Wallace/C Watkins/adults
Pack away any equipment	J Wallace/C Watkins/everyone
Closing circle – reflections	J Wallace/C Watkins
Check children in and out for the toilet	J Wallace/C Watkins/adults
Check site is tidy	J Wallace/C Watkins
Check equipment is all present and in working order	J Wallace/C Watkins
Have evaluation conversation while it's still fresh	J Wallace/C Watkins

General Forest School Risk Assessments

Portishead Primary Forest School Sessions Risk Assessment: General – relevant to every session

Hazard	Possible harm	Precautions taken to minimise risk	Risk level l/m/h
Weather - heat	Sunburn, overheating	Parents to apply sunhats and sun cream, have plenty of water available	m
wind	falling branches/trees	cancel in high winds, check overhanging branches after high winds	h
cold	exposure to cold	check appropriate clothing, keep them moving, warm drinks	m
wet	slippery surfaces	discourage running and climbing wet branches after/during heavy rain.	m

Slippery ground, trips and falls	Cuts and bruises, sprains and fractures	Discourage running, point out hazard markers at start of session	M
Stinging insects and plants	Allergic reactions, tick bites (Lyme disease), infection of wound	Check medical info and ensure EpiPen's are held by parents/carers where needed. Encourage long sleeves and trousers. Ask parents to check for ticks at bath time.	L
Sticks, stones and mud	Injury – scrapes, bumps, mud in eyes, impalement, injury from thrown object	Ensure rules on use of natural materials are followed (see health and safety procedures in handbook)	L
Behaviour of participants	Injury from unsafe behaviour	Encourage respectful, collaborative behaviour. Follow behaviour policy in handbook	l
Dead wood	Falling branches, insecure climbing logs/branches causing injury	Check visually and physically those within the forest school site at the beginning of each session.	m
Food preparation	Food poisoning, unhygienic preparation can cause illness	Wash hands before eating. Ensure cooked food is well cooked and heated.	l
Tools	Injury from misuse	See tools policy in handbook	m
Fire	Burns, smoke inhalation	See fire policy in handbook	M