

Forest School Handbook

2025-2026

Redhill C of E Primary School

Forest School Leader: Miss Wright



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Our Vision Statement

At Redhill we strive to provide all our children with a unique and engaging outdoor learning program. Our vision is to create an inclusive and inspiring Forest School program that enriches the educational experience of every student, fostering a lifelong love of learning and nature. We believe that the natural environment is a rich classroom that promotes holistic development, creativity, and a lifelong appreciation for the environment. Our hands on approach to Forest School allows all our children to build on skills outside of the classroom and flourish in the natural environment.

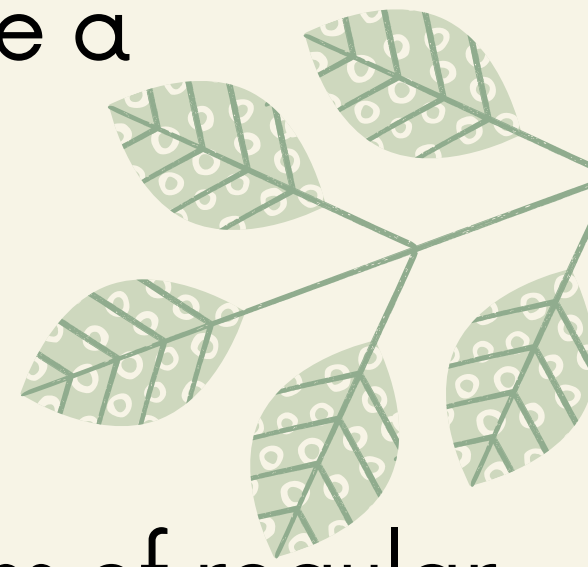
Forest School is a long term program that takes place regularly in our onsite woodland area. Through play, exploration and guided activities Forest School encourages our children too:

- Build confidence and independence
- Develop social and communication skills
- Improve problem-solving and creativity
- Learn new skills like fire safety, tool use and knot tying
- Build a lifelong relationship with the natural world



Forest School Principles

The Forest School principles are guidelines that underpin the ethos and practice of Forest School education. These principles ensure a consistent and holistic approach to outdoor learning.



The key principles of Forest School are:

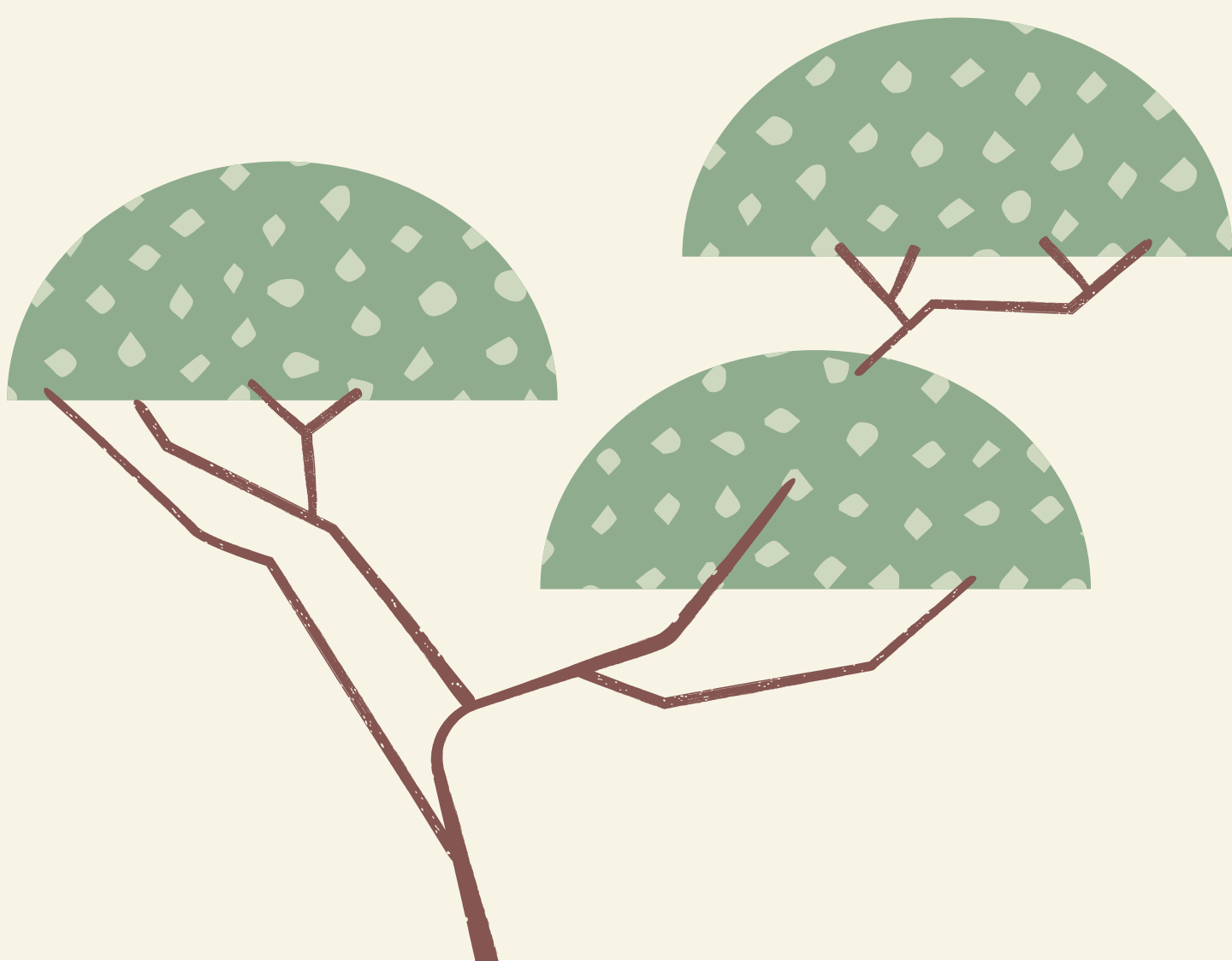
1. Long-Term Process: Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than one-off or short-term activities. This consistent exposure allows children to develop a deeper connection with nature and build on their skills and knowledge over time.
2. Holistic Development: The focus is on holistic development, encompassing emotional, social, physical, and cognitive growth. Activities are designed to support all aspects of a child's development.
3. Child-Centered: Forest School promotes a learner-centered approach where children have the freedom to explore, discover, and learn at their own pace. This fosters independence, confidence, and self-esteem.
4. Risk Management: Children are encouraged to take appropriate risks in a controlled environment. This helps them develop risk assessment skills, resilience, and problem-solving abilities.
5. Connection with Nature: A core aim is to foster a deep, lasting connection with the natural world. This includes developing respect for the environment and understanding the importance of sustainability.
6. Qualified Practitioners: Forest School sessions are led by qualified practitioners who have received specialised training in Forest School principles and practices. This ensures a high standard of delivery and safety.
7. Reflective Practice: Practitioners engage in reflective practice to continually improve the quality of Forest School experiences.
8. Community and Social Development: Forest School encourages cooperation and teamwork, helping children develop social skills and build positive relationships with peers and adults.

Forest School Rules

The Forest School rules ensures a safe and enjoyable experince for all. These guidelines help the children respect the natural environment whilst promoting a positive learning environment.

- No lick, no pick - Do not lick or pick any plants, mushrooms, or natural objects.
- Stop at the boundary - Do not go beyond the marked areas to ensure everyone's safety and to prevent disruption of the natural habitat.
- Listen to the leaders - Always listen to and follow instructions from the Forest School leaders, we are there to keep you safe.
- Respect nature - Treat all plants, animals, and natural objects with care.

Take only memories and leave only footprints.



The school behaviour policy is followed at all times.

Clothing Expectations



The following clothing rules must be followed by children and staff:

- Long Sleeves - wear long-sleeved shirts or tops to protect arms from scratches, insect bites, and sun exposure.
- Trousers - wear long trousers to safeguard legs from scratches, stings, and harsh weather conditions.
- Wellies or walking boots - children will wear wellington boots or sturdy walking boots to keep feet dry, provide good traction, and protect against mud, water, and uneven terrain.
- Waterproofs - children must have a waterproof jacket at all times and preferably waterproof trousers. Weather conditions can change quickly, and it's important to be prepared.
- Hat and gloves - in colder weather, children must wear a warm hat and gloves.
- Sun protection - during the summer children must wear a hat to protect your face from the sun and apply sunscreen to exposed skin.

Please ensure children have spare clothes with them in school incase they need to change after a session.

Children not dressed appropriately will not be able to attend Forest School sessions.

Forest School Routine

Pre session procedures

- Before each session the FSL will do a safety sweep
- Any new hazards will be removed or have a safety boundary around it.
- Any changes due to weather will be assessed
- Equipment will be checked, ensuring all tools are safe to use.

Forest School session

- All children's clothing to be checked prior to leaving the classroom.
- Children will enter the Forest School and sit at basecamp.
- Recap of Forest School rules, expectations of children.
- Mindfulness minute. Children can sit quietly, reflect, listen to the nature.
- Sessions activities will be discussed.
- Children to be supported by FSL and assistant throughout the session.
- Children will be called back to basecamp near the end of the session to share creations and observations they have made. This is a time for songs and games together.

Post session procedures

- Children to change in to clean clothes if needed.
- All tools and equipment to be cleaned (and sharpened if needed) and put away.



Role of the Forest School Leader and Assistants

The role of the Forest School Leader

The role of the Forest School leader is to facilitate and manage the outdoor education program whilst encouraging and inspiring all children. The Forest School Leader provides the space, time and resources for the children to become independent learners by exploring and acting on their own imagination. The Forest School Leader will design and plan activities that align with the principles of Forest School, ensuring sessions are engaging, educational, and appropriate for the age and developmental stages of the children. In an emergency the role of the forest school leader is to assess the level of risk and to help instruct the assistants in where they need to be. The forest school leader will be referring to the risk assessment in this handbook.

The role of Forest School assistants and volunteers

Forest School Assistants play a crucial role in creating a safe, engaging and educational outdoor learning environment, supporting both the children and the Forest School Leader effectively. Assistants engage with children, encouraging exploration and curiosity. They will support individual and group activities, helping children with tasks and guiding their learning experiences, under the guidance of the FSL.



Risk Assessment – Offsite Visits Risk Benefit Assessment

Title / Activity	Forest School Risk Assessment	Department	Forest School	Risk Level Estimator					
				Likelihood	Highly Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely		
				Consequence					
				Slightly Harmful	Trivial	Tolerable	Moderate		
				Harmful	Tolerable	Moderate	Substantial		
				Extremely Harmful	Moderate	Substantial	Intolerable		
Visit Date/s	Academic year 2025-2026	Assessor Name(s) Titles	Iona Wright						
Learning Outcomes	For all children to access an outdoor learning program.								

Consider significant risks for: Staff, Transport, Activity, Group, Environment, Distance (STAGED)

- Activity - Hazard (potential to harm) - And Risk (consequence)	Who's at Risk?	Control Measures	Risk Evaluation After control measures	Benefits, Further Action Required + Implementable or Not
Adverse weather conditions	Children and staff	FSL to monitor the weather.	Tolerable	Control measures considered acceptable.
Wind can cause branches to fall off trees.		No sessions to take part if thunder and lightning is forecast or wind over 30mph.		
Heavy rain can cause risk of slipping.		FSL to monitor ground conditions on morning safety sweep.		Changing weather conditions risk evaluated by FSL in the moment.
Cold weather could risk children and staffs' health.		Sun cream, hats and water to be encouraged during warm weather.		
Hot sun can cause burns and dehydration.		Shelters from rain to be provided.		

STAYING SAFE...

Risk Assessment – Offsite Visits Risk Benefit Assessment

<p>• <u>Tree climbing</u> Falling from height when climbing up a tree. Tree branch break.</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Trees that can be safely climbed are identified. Supervision of children Clear rules for how to climb and what height is acceptable. FSL first aid trained.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Benefits for children tree climbing improving gross motor skills, confidence and self-managing risk.</p>
<p><u>Campfire</u> Risk of burns Risk of smoke inhalation</p>	<p>Children and staff</p>	<p>Clear rules for everybody. No children to enter the fire circle unless asked by FSL. All children to be sat quietly around the log circle. All children's clothing checked to ensure there is no hanging items and hair is tied back. Fire is always supervised by FSL until it is put out. Fire safety square around fire to prevent children getting too close. Children to sit with FSL when using the fire. Safety equipment e.g., Water, fire gloves Safe storage of fire lightening equipment.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable.</p>
<p><u>Uneven and slippery ground</u> Risk of falling and tripping</p>	<p>Children and staff</p>	<p>Daily safety sweep of area. Brief children on which areas are slippery and how to safely access those areas. Children to be supported. FSL first aid trained</p>	<p>Trivial</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Ground to be continued to be levelled and risks to be continually removed.</p>

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Risk Assessment – Offsite Visits Risk Benefit Assessment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p><u>Animal droppings</u> Risk of children consuming animal droppings. Risk of animal droppings being on children's hands.</p> 	Children	<p>FSL to remove as much animal droppings as possible. Children made aware not to touch animal droppings. Hands to be washed after every session. Children taught to not put hands in mouth.</p>	Trivial	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Education on animal droppings identification.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p><u>Poisonous plants, fungi and mushrooms</u> Risk of children consuming poisonous plants, fungi or mushroom.</p> 	Children and staff	<p>Children and adults to be made aware of the species, where they are and how to act around them. Adults to supervise vulnerable children. Children to be made aware of yew tree in the site. Fungus to be removed or cordoned off.</p>	Tolerable	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Education on habitats and plants and why we must respect all nature.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p><u>Bites and stings</u> Risk of children being stung or bitten by insects or plants.</p> 	Children and staff	<p>Correct clothing will help prevent against stings, long trousers and long sleeve tops. Nettles that are in the direct path to be cleared. Educate on not catching and chasing bees and wasps, how to stay calm around them. FSL first aid trained</p>	Trivial	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Education on different habitats and animals and why we must respect all nature.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p><u>Den building.</u> Risk of sticks and branches falling and causing injury Use of ropes</p> 	Children	<p>Stick safety – how to safely carry sticks and appropriate use of sticks. Dragging larger sticks along the ground and keeping thumb over the end. Rope safety – what we do and don't do with ropes. Supervision by adults when using rope.</p>	Tolerable	<p>Control measures considered acceptable.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p><u>Cooking food on fire</u> Risk of burning Risk of food poisoning</p> 	Children and staff	<p>Adult supervision <u>at all times</u>. Only low risk foods to be cooked.</p>	Tolerable	<p>Control measures considered acceptable.</p>

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Risk Assessment – Offsite Visits Risk Benefit Assessment

<p><u>Pond and streams</u></p> <p>Risk of children getting wet Risk of drowning</p>	<p>Children and staff</p>	<p>Pond is fenced off. Decked platform where children can safely access the pond. Only two children to be allowed at a time into the fenced off area with an adult. Always supervised by adult. Streams around the site to be monitored and accessed on the day whether the children can use them. Swails are covered in gravel to prevent standing water.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Educational benefits of the pond, exploration of a unique habitat.</p>
<p><u>Tools</u></p> <p><u>Penknives</u></p> <p>Risk of injury whilst using tool</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Safety instructions by FSL Used seated, away from body, “blood bubble”. Work in small groups with FSL Roped of area where tools are used. Glove on bracing hand. Penknives stored in locked box only accessible to FSL. Tool inspected by FSL before use. All knives to be cleaned and sharpened by FSL after every use.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable.</p>
<p><u>Peelers</u></p> <p>Risk of injury whilst using tool</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Safety instructions by FSL– used seated, away from body, “blood bubble”. Work in small groups with FSL Roped of area where tools are used. Glove on bracing hand Peelers stored in locked box only accessible to FSL.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable.</p>

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Risk Assessment – Offsite Visits Risk Benefit Assessment

<p><u>Fire steel and fire lighting</u></p> <p>Risk of injury whilst using tool Risk of creating fire</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Tool inspected by FSL before use. All peelers to be cleaned after use by FSL. Used is roped of safety area. Work in small groups with FSL. Loose clothing removed. Long hair tied back. Strike away from body. Tool kept by FSL securely.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Benefits includes encouraging practical skills, develops responsibility and safety awareness.</p>
<p><u>Bow saw</u></p> <p>Risk of injury whilst using tool</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Work with FSL whilst using the tool. Use within the roped of tool area. Glove on bracing hand Tool checked by FSL before use. Saw to be cleaned by FSL after every use.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Benefits includes encouraging practical skills, develops responsibility and safety awareness.</p>
<p><u>Silkie saw</u></p> <p>Risk of injury whilst using tool</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Work with FSL whilst using the tool. Use within the roped of tool area. Glove on bracing hand Tool checked by FSL before use. Saw to be cleaned by FSL after every use.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Benefits includes encouraging practical skills, develops responsibility and safety awareness.</p>
<p><u>Hand drill</u></p> <p>Risk of injury whilst using tool</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Always work onto a secure work surface. Wear glove on bracing hand. Keep loose hair and clothing tied back. Used in roped off tool area. Tool to be cleaned by FSL after every use.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Benefits includes encouraging practical skills, develops responsibility and safety awareness.</p>

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Risk Assessment – Offsite Visits Risk Benefit Assessment

<p><u>Axe</u></p> <p>Risk of injury whilst using tool</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Work with FSL whilst using the tool. Use within the roped of tool area. Glove on bracing hand. Tool checked by FSL before use. Used with a splitting aid.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Benefits includes encouraging practical skills, develops responsibility and safety awareness.</p>
<p><u>Hammer</u></p> <p>Risk of injury whilst using tool</p>	<p>Children</p>	<p>Work with FSL whilst using the tool. Hammer has good grip on. Use within the roped of tool area. Glove on bracing hand. Tool checked by FSL before use.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Control measures considered acceptable. Benefits includes encouraging practical skills, develops responsibility and safety awareness.</p>
<p><u>Crossing drive to Site</u></p>	<p>Children & Adults</p>	<p>Electronic gates <u>restricts</u> the flow and speed of traffic on and off site. Fencing to EYFS enables the crossing of the drive to be easily and safely monitored. Adult to pupil ratio enables safe commuting to forest school site.</p>	<p>Tolerable</p>	