

Broadwater Down Primary School



Forest School Handbook and Policies for Parents

October 2017



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Broadwater Down's Forest School Principles and Ethos

What is Forest School?

'Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees'.

(Forest School Association)

At Broadwater Down Primary School, through our Forest School sessions, we hope to encourage independent, enthusiastic and creative learners who develop holistically through a well-planned and interesting child-centred approach.

Forest School Setting:

Broadwater Down has access to two sites that can be used to deliver Forest School sessions. The first site is our own wooded area, and the second is Hargate Forest, working with Kent High Weald Partnership, with kind permission from the landowners – the Woodland Trust.

The Forest School Principles:

In developing our approach to Forest School at Broadwater Down we have adopted the ethos and principles of the Forest School Association. The Forest School ethos has 6 principles, which were agreed by the UK Forest School Community in 2011.

1. Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions and aims for children to visit in blocks of six to eight weeks each time. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are all integral parts of the Forest School process.
2. It takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment – we have been offered an area in Hargate Forest for use by the whole school, as well as utilising our own site based at school.
3. We aim to promote the holistic development of all children involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
4. We will offer learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.
5. It will be managed by a qualified Forest School Practitioner from the Kent High Weald Partnership (level 3 accreditation) and Penny Kift a School Governor with a level 2 Forest School Assistance qualification.
6. We will use a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning that is responsive to needs and interests of the learners.

The Forest School Principles and other information can be located at:

<http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

Forest School Ethos:

At Broadwater Down we are committed to the ethos of Forest School and aim to:

- Develop a love of learning that creates independent and confident learners
- Promote a secure, exciting and fascinating learning environment
- Support a positive relationship with home and the wider community
- Promote children's self-esteem
- Encourage independence
- Promote positive behaviour to ensure the safe running of Forest School sessions
- Provide appropriate adult to child ratios
- Plan sessions that contribute towards a safe environment



Broadwater Down's Forest School Rules and Routines

Our Rules and Routines at Forest School:

Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children in the classroom beforehand, in conjunction with the School's Behaviour Policy.

Children will also help set rules, which will be revisited at every session. These include:

- 'No pick, no lick, be careful how you carry a stick' (except where picking is suggested for particular activities)
- Respect for plants, trees and animals
- Staying in view of the base camp at all times
- Staying within the designated areas at all times
- Adult supervision for tree climbing

Adult Role:

All adults at Forest School model appropriate behaviour and safe practices, whilst interacting with the children and each other; boundaries are shared, promoting positive reinforcement and choices and consequences discussed. They will:

- Promote the safety and well-being of the children at all times
- Carry out necessary risk benefit assessments
- Carry a first aid kit in the 'emergency rucksack' and administer first aid as required
- Create a positive learning environment, based on each child's needs
- Encourage good relationships, based on respect of each other
- Promote, honesty, politeness and kindness through example

- Use encouraging language and show appreciation of each child's contributions and effort
- Ensure fair treatment and equality for all attending, regardless of age, gender, faith, ability or race, in line with the school's Equality Policy.

Session Outline:

Although each session will be unique and will respond to the children's interests and the seasons, each session will have a basic routine to which the activities will be added.

- Walk into the forest school site
- Safety reminders
- Activities to choose from and free play (activities may include fire-lighting, tool use, art and craft, den-building, hammocks)
- Drink and reflection time
- Walk out

Transport and Travel Arrangements for Forest School:

The children walk to our school site or to Hargate Forest. Sometimes, they are transported by mini-bus to Hargate Forest. The mini-bus will be driven by a qualified driver who has undertaken mini-bus training. In the event of there not being a minibus available, children will walk to and from the site accompanied by school staff.

Forest School visits will be completed in accordance with Broadwater Down's Outdoor Activities and Educational Visits Policy which follows Kent County Council guidance.

Adult to child ratios are as follows for educational visits:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – 1:4
- Years 1 to 3 – 1:6
- Years 4 to 6 – 1:10

However for Forest School sessions the following ratios will be used because of the nature of the activities being undertaken:

- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) – 1:4
- Key Stage One – 1:6
- Key Stage Two – 1:6 to 1:8 (depending on the level of risk)

Adults can be made up of staff and volunteers. There must always be a minimum of three adults on site and whenever possible the Forest School Leader will be supernumerary.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Weather Policy

Part of Broadwater Down's Forest School ethos is to encourage children to embrace the challenges of the British weather and therefore Forest School will only be cancelled in adverse weather conditions.

Parents/carers should, however, assume that Forest School sessions will be taking place as planned unless they hear otherwise from the school.

The school will constantly monitor adverse weather and met office updates whilst undertaking Forest School sessions and maintain an awareness of any change or action that needs to be taken, including potentially delaying the start of sessions until the weather settles rather than calling a blanket cancellation.

Cancellation Procedure:

The school will use local weather forecasts to assess weather conditions prior to taking out a group, but will always try and leave cancellation of Forest School as late as possible and only as a final option. Below is a short outline of conditions that may lead to a cancellation of a session:

- A rough guide is not to enter woods in winds of greater than force 4 or in Amber, or above, weather warnings of winds above 25 mph.
- In windy conditions the Forest School Leader will keep a watchful eye on the surrounding tree branches - A rule of thumb is to leave the wood if substantial tree branches are blowing at 20 degrees or more (approximately greater sway than from 11 to 1 on a clock face). Be aware that it is possible for tree limbs and branches to drop any day, not just in windy conditions.
- If storms are forecast the session will be cancelled.

If children are noticeably getting cold or damp or uncomfortable the Forest School Leader will warm them up through exercise, shared shelter, sitting by a fire or – as a last resort - cancel the session and return to school.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Clothing Policy

It is nearly always true to say, "there is no such thing as bad weather, just unsuitable clothing."

We aim to go out in all seasons, so for each session we need participants to dress appropriately. Our sessions are relatively active, but in winter spending hours outside can mean getting very cold if a participant isn't wearing several layers, warm socks, a hat, gloves, scarf, etc. Children should start each session wearing their Forest School clothes and carrying their rucksack and wellington boots or outdoor shoes.

During Forest School Activities, all members of the group must abide by the following Clothing Policy:

- Appropriate footwear to be worn at all times. Ideally, these will be Wellington boots or walking boots. These will be the property of the wearer unless the school is able to provide a spare pair of boots for odd sessions from its spare kit.
- Long trousers will always be worn at Forest School. This is to protect the person from scratches from brambles, thorns and holly, nettle stings, insect bites, insect stings and from burning by the sun. Jeans are not advised as they take a long time to dry if they should get wet.
- Long sleeves will always be worn at Forest School. This is to protect the person from scratches from brambles, thorns and holly, nettle stings, insect bites, insect stings and from burning by the sun.
- Appropriate waterproofs must be provided by parents and carers at all Forest School sessions. The children will need to be provided with a waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers or all in one waterproof suitable for a woodland environment.
- School may be able to provide children with waterproofs for odd sessions from the spare kit box.
- In colder weather, children are to be responsible for wearing layers of warm clothing underneath their waterproofs.
- In cold weather, children should wear hats and gloves, although gloves will need to be removed for some tool work.
- Children will need a ruck sack (lined with a waterproof bag in wet weather) that contains spare socks, jumper, trousers (not jeans) and a water bottle.
- School will take a spare set of clothing, including hat and gloves, in the dry-bag kept solely for that purpose.
- In warm weather the children must be provided with a sunhat, preferably with a neck guard to prevent sunstroke.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Hygiene Policy

Toileting:

- Children will be asked and encouraged to use the toilet before leaving school
- On site, there will be a portable toilet inside a pop-up tent for use by all parties
- If a child has a wetting or soiling accident, they will change in accordance with usual school procedures (where this is likely, the pupil should bring with him/her a set of clean clothes)

Hand Washing:

- Whenever possible, soap and water will be used for handwashing
- Disposable paper towels will be used for drying and bagged for disposal
- Wet wipes will be available throughout the session

Cooking and Eating:

- Children will be supervised 1:2 when cooking on the camp fire
- Children will wash and dry hands and sit on the base camp benches/logs when consuming any food
- All allergies or dietary requirements will be recorded on the Forest School consent form and this will be taken into consideration when deciding on what food will be prepared during Forest School sessions
- Drinking water will be available



Broadwater Down's Forest School Equal Opportunities Statement

This policy operates in line with all school policies:

- No child or adult will be discriminated against on any grounds including gender, age, background, race, religion or ability including SEND.
- Wherever possible, adjustments will be made to accommodate children with allergies, medical conditions or behavioural issues. This may include additional adult helpers, adapting the site if physically possible or adapting activities.
- All participants should feel that their experiences and contributions are worthwhile, so raising self-esteem and confidence.
- Forest School is a child-led experience and wherever possible the children will be allowed to follow their own interests providing they show respect for each other and the woodland environment.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Safeguarding Statement

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with Broadwater Down's Safeguarding Policy, available on the school website.

A summary of the policy is included below:

- Every child has the right to be kept safe from danger and learn in a safe and secure environment
- All staff and volunteers involved in Forest School hold relevant DBS checks
- All Forest School staff attend regular safeguarding training
- All concerns and disclosures are confidential and will only be shared with the school's designated safeguarding leaders and necessary agencies, if appropriate.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Mrs Lonie and the Deputy DSL is Mrs Barber.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Confidentiality Policy

All Forest School staff and volunteers must adhere to the confidentiality policy.

Medical and Personal information

- All adults will be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need to know basis and kept confidentially within the school's Forest School Handbook
- In case of emergency, contact numbers of each child will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook
- Only trained staff will apply first aid to children and adults attending; volunteers must make staff aware if they are approached by a child needing care
- Any adults attending, with medical conditions, must disclose this to the Forest School Leader; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

Photographic and Video Permissions

- As part of the permission to attend Forest School sessions, parents will be asked to agree to their child being photographed or filmed for observational, training or school promotion purposes; any child without this permission will be recorded in the school's Forest School Handbook
- Only school cameras and iPads must be used for this purpose
- Volunteers should only use school cameras under the guidance of the Forest School Leader
- Mobile phones should only be used for emergency purposes and to contact the School Office

Observations

- Trained staff will be required to undertake observations and assessments of the children attending, as part of the curriculum
- Observations will be kept in school and remain confidential to that child and family
- Volunteers may give oral feedback to a staff member regarding an activity; this must be in strict confidence.

Volunteers

All volunteers attending Forest School sessions must sign a confidentiality statement before attending and read this handbook.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Missing Person Policy

Broadwater Down Forest School's overarching priority in everything it sets out to achieve is to keep all children safe. This Policy shall be applied whether the group are working at the Hargate Forest site or school site.

Unknown woods can be disorientating, especially if a participant is unused to this kind of environment. Many woodland sites are not surrounded by walls or fences, and whilst we appreciate this sense of freedom can be beneficial to all, there is also the possibility that a participant may get lost. There are a number of ways we can prevent this:

1. We encourage all our participants to take an interest in their surroundings so as to help find their bearings. Ultimately we would like to inspire all who are able to become responsible for their own safety with respect to staying close to the rest of the group.
2. Boundaries will be chosen, clearly marked and made known to the group. Going outside the boundaries will require all of the group to go, or a sub group, with at least one leader – allowing at least two leaders to stay with the remainder of the group.
3. The group will be counted in and checked at start and end of a session, then at other relevant points in the session – particularly after activities that include members splitting up.
4. Good communication with the group will encourage collective responsibility for each other's safety – leaders are always approachable and should be made aware if there are any concerns as to a participant's whereabouts.

If it is discovered that a child is missing from the group, the situation will be taken very seriously from the outset and the following emergency procedure will be implemented:

1. The Forest School Leader shall be informed immediately.
2. Activity for the rest of the group shall be suspended in order that up to two members of staff, including the Forest School Leader if appropriate may be released to conduct a search which shall last no more than five minutes.
3. The remaining children will be given a low risk activity to complete, within the Fire Circle by the remaining adults, being mindful not to increase anxiety of the group. At least two members of staff must stay with the remaining children.
4. If, after the five minute search, the child has not been located, the Forest School Leader will phone 999 and alert the police.
5. Broadwater Down Primary School will be informed so that they can contact the child's parents and inform them of the situation.
6. Leaders must recall and write down a description of what the missing person was wearing, any distinguishing features, any information on their last known location, time last seen and any special medical or learning needs. All information then must be passed to police or other agencies.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Communication Statement

Clear communication is essential for the smooth running of Forest School. Children and adults need to listen carefully to rules, boundaries and instructions, linked to safety procedures and activities. There will always be time for questions or comments from children and adults.

- All adults attending will have received a copy of the Emergency Action Plan which will be kept in the school's Forest School Handbook, in the 'emergency rucksack'.
- Any staff or volunteers attending Forest School must meet prior to leaving school to review ratios, health and safety and risk assessment for the day.
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give as much notice as possible and preferably 24 hours. If a replacement cannot be found the session will need to be cancelled due to inadequate ratios of child to adult.
- The Forest School Leader will have a mobile phone for emergency use and to keep in contact with the School Office.
- A copy of this Handbook will be available on the school website.
- Parents will receive a general information letter before the sessions begin, a permission slip and details of transport.
- Basic session information will be shared with children and staff prior to the visit; rules will be discussed and practised in the classroom setting.

The Forest School Leader will be responsible for communicating between the Home and School and the Woodland Owners.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Practical Skills and Tool Use

General Rules for Tool Use:

- All tools have a separate risk assessment
- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools on school premises
- All staff ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site
- All tools should be signed out when in use
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

Fixed Blade Knives:

- Children must be supported 1:4 or lower depending on age range by an adult, preferably the Forest School Leader, initially demonstrating good practice
- Users should preferably be sat down in a designated area
- Knives should be used away from the body
- Ensure knives are clean and covered when not in use.

Bow-Saw or Pruning Saw:

- Children will be supported 1:2 (bow-saw) or 1:1 (pruning saw) by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Guard is in place when not in use
- Use in a designated tool area away from others
- Use with a glove on the non-sawing hand (Helping Hand)
- Use a saw-horse where possible with the bow saw.

Loppers and Secateurs:

- Children must be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Use in a designated tool area, away from others
- Loppers must be kept closed except when in use
- Loppers must only be used above the ground if possible.

Fire:

- Fires must only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone
- Safe fire-lighting equipment must be used with no accelerants
- An adult must be located at the fire at all times
- Suitable accident prevention and management should be next to site
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire
- Site to be made safe on completion of activity
- Cooking or other activities located near the fire to have ratios of 1:2.

Ropes and Knots:

- All equipment to be regularly checked for fraying etc.
- Children should not wrap rope around their bodies
- Children should be encouraged to learn to tie and undo simple knots
- If tying between trees, the rope should be able to be seen and not cause a trip hazard.



Broadwater Down's Forest School Parent Consent Form

Child's Name:	
<input type="checkbox"/> I have received and read the Parents' Forest School Handbook.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I give permission for my child to walk to and to attend Forest School Sessions delivered by Forest School Leaders and teachers.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I understand that my child will need suitable clothing and footwear as outlined in the Parents' Forest School Handbook.	
<input type="checkbox"/> I give permission for my child to receive medical attention from qualified school staff and/or medical staff in an emergency. (The school will usually act in loco parentis until a parent is able to attend).	
I give permission for photos taken during Forest School sessions to be used in:	
<input type="checkbox"/> The school newsletter	
<input type="checkbox"/> The school website	
Medical Information:	
Dietary Requirements/Allergies:	
Medical Conditions and Medication:	
Other Allergies:	
Emergency Contact Details:	Emergency Contact Details:
Number:	Number:
Name:	Name:
Relationship:	Relationship:
Additional Comments:	
Name of parent/carer:	
Signature of parent/carer:	
Date:	

NB No child will be permitted to attend Forest School without appropriate clothing and footwear as outlined in the Clothing Policy on page 7.