

Lime Tree Forest school

Operational Handbook



What is Forest School?

Forest school is an outdoor learning experience, which teaches children, young people and adults how to develop skills, confidence and independence using a woodland setting.

Forest school originated from Scandinavia, and was brought over to the UK in 1993 by staff from The Bridgewater College in Somerset. The Forest school sessions enable the learner to develop personal skills, increase in self-confidence and self-awareness, build resilience, improve communication, understand risk-taking and problem solve. Activities are broad and can cover many curriculum subjects from foundation stage right up to Key Stage 4. The activities are developed according to individual needs of the participants, enabling every-one to succeed. Forest school follows a child led approach to learning and follows the Forest School ethos.

Forest School Ethos

Forest school ethos takes the lid off the classroom. At forest school children engage in a positive learning experience that takes place within our school grounds. Forest School sessions are delivered by qualified level 3 leaders, and supported by school staff and volunteers, so as to provide the best quality provision. Using methods of self-directed play and activities, the learners are given the space to explore, experience and grow as both individuals and as a group. Some activities are planned, others emerge or evolve from the children's imagination and play, but unlike traditional outdoor learning, forest school takes place over a long-term period at regular intervals. The forest school sessions give the children opportunity to engage in their own play, giving them the space to find out how to risk assess, self regulate and grow in confidence. Using reviewing and reflection throughout the practice, their new skills and successes are re- enforced, giving them skills and experiences that set them up for life. The activities are focused on the needs and abilities of the child, giving opportunity for every child to learn in a positive environment, according to their own learning methods. Here at Lime Tree we follow the 6 principles of Forest School as laid out by the Forest School Association.

Summary – Forest School principles & practice

(Full version available in our Lime Tree Outdoor learning Handbook or at <https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/>)

Principle 1:

Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

Principle 2:

Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

Principle 3:

Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

Principle 4:

Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

Principle 5.

Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

Principle 6.

Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

Where does Forest School take place?

Here at Lime Tree our Forest School sessions take place in either Lomax Wood, on the school farm or in Friendship Wood – all within the school grounds. Changing the location provides both a variety of experiences for the child as well as giving rest time for the land that they play on. There may be an occasion that we go off site to use the local park or woodland during the program. We notify parents if this is the case and gain consent.

How is Forest School delivered?

Forest school sessions are very much lead by the learner/participant. Our Forest School leaders introduce games and concepts and then encourage the children and young people to determine the direction of play using the natural environment, imagination and creativity. This may include story telling, den building, habitat study, tool work, playing simple games such as hide and seek and much more. Some sessions may follow a particular part of school curriculum enabling sessions to be linked back to work being completed in the classroom. This is not however always the case and is delivered in a way which allows the children freedom to lead the direction of the session.

Who is delivering it?

Here at Lime Tree our Forest School sessions are lead by Mrs Green (level 3 trained practitioner & trainer) and Mrs Cawley (Trainee Level 3 practitioner). They are employed full time as part of the school team. Sessions are often supported by class teachers and teaching assistants. Their role is to support the Forest school lead and enable the children to have a safe enjoyable session. We also have local community and parent volunteers supporting our sessions. All staff and volunteers are subject to safer recruitment procedures and are trained by the Forest School leaders to follow the Forest School ethos and work within the expected health and safety regime (see appendix 5). All staff are involved in reflective practice and ongoing discussion about practice and ethos and also attend a training session to equip them for their role.

Health & safety within Forest School

Our Forest School leaders draw up thorough risk assessments for all activities, which take place in the woods, which are agreed with the Head of school and are also discussed with the children throughout sessions. There are risk factors when children play in woodland, however we look at the risk benefits for the child, and therefore provide a safe environment where children can learn through risky play. Not all risks may be accounted for when children play. As children use their imagination through play, or circumstances change due to weather or other external factors for example broken tree branches, risks can change. Our Forest School leaders and support workers monitor and evaluate risk throughout the sessions, making adjustments where needed in order to keep the children and staff safe during play. This is what is known as the dynamic risk assessment – it is an ongoing process which staff implement and review throughout every session. The flowchart in appendix 1 shows how this process works. When required, use of woodland or parks will have been arranged with the relevant authorities/ owners to ensure that risk assessments and use of land is agreed. Forest School leaders are qualified in outdoor first aid should the need arise for first aid.

Our Forest School sessions have 10 children to 2 adults supervising at a minimum. Where numbers go above 10 (max 12) an extra support will be present. For Earth adventures (Key stage 2), numbers are limited to 13 in a group with 2 adults, a third will attend where there are special educational needs. All forest school sessions are on site and within walking distance of main classrooms/tree tots should there be an emergency. Staff will carry walkie-talkies (as well as mobile phones) to call for help from SLT in case of child emergency or practitioner illness / injury . Our outdoor spaces are no more than a 2 minute walk from the main school office.

Hand-washing facilities will be provided either by water bottles & wipes or sink when near a building. We ensure that children are dressed appropriately for the weather. Parents are asked to supply wellington boots, warm and waterproof coat and hats and gloves accordingly. Where these may be missing we have spares and supply the children. We also provide warm waterproof trousers and coats to every child during the colder months, and light-weight waterproofs in the summer months when required (see appendix 2).

Our Forest School policies & procedures

Our Forest School policy is available to view on our school website:
<https://www.limetree.trafford.sch.uk/our-curriculum/outdoors/>.

Lime Tree Governors and School leadership fully support and endorse our Forest School practice and ethos. We also adhere to the following Lime Tree Primary Academy school policies:

Relationships & Behaviour Regulation policy, Safeguarding policy, Confidentiality Policy, Anti-Bullying policy and complaints policy, all available to view on our school website at <https://limetree.bright-futures.co.uk/about-us/policies/>

We also follow the wider Bright Futures Educational Trust policies which includes the Health & Safety Policy also found on the school website.

In addition to these policies, our Forest School leaders work closely with class teachers and school senior leadership throughout. Our higher ratios of adults to children, allows for support required to all children.

Conflict resolution and behaviour management can be simpler within the woodland setting as there is more space and time for children to discuss problems or regulate. We do not specifically give out sanctions/rewards in forest school. We work with all the children and aim to have each child attending every session. We support children to work through any disagreements or behaviour issues in a way that keeps it inclusive. Rewards are intrinsic to forest school due to the ethos itself. We discuss negative behaviour on a session by session basis and include child, class teacher and parent, only when a situation can not be resolved during the session and leaves the child or others at risk.

As we may go off site for some of our forest school sessions, we operate under Trafford's offsite visits system (using Evolve). This ensures we are regularly updating and following risk assessments and have all the correct procedures in place.

All staff and volunteers are trained at a minimum of level 1 safeguarding. All are trained to understand and work within a confidential setting. Forest School leaders hold the responsibility to ensure reasonable care for all children and staff within the woodland setting. Information about children is kept in line with GDPR and only shared with relevant members of the teaching staff and parents when necessary to do so.

Forest School leaders are responsible for the upkeep and health and safety of the woodland areas of the school grounds, in partnership with the school site manager and Trafford Health and Safety unit.

In regard to bullying, we believe by creating a safe, secure and caring Forest School environment we will encourage all pupils to report any incident of bullying to a member of the Forest School team and then the school personnel (class teacher or safeguarding team as appropriate). We follow the School anti-bullying policy which can be found at <https://limetree.bright-futures.co.uk/about-us/policies/>

It is an expectation that all parents sign a Forest School consent letter when children join the School. Without this, children are not allowed to attend forest school. We also provide a parent handbook explaining the ethos and reasoning behind forest school practice and why we offer this to the children. Parents are invited to a Forest school taster session whilst their children attend Nursery and reception to allow parents to experience Forest School and ask questions or to raise concerns. Should we take the children off site, separate consent is required for such visits. (See appendix 3).

Emergency Planning procedures

Emergency Action Plan – Onsite

In event of an emergency – child or staff member

First aider to take control of incident (if the incident involves the other staff member in the group and/or further staff support required, use walkie talkie to call for back up from SLT on call in the main building)

First aider to call the relevant emergency services & Adult to make contact with office/teacher from the class

Other adult to take kids away from the situation.

In case of staff required to attend hospital with a child, the other member of staff will either return the group to class or await a member of staff to join the group – to be agreed according to the emergency by the Head or SLT manager.

All parents to be informed accordingly by the school staff.

All paper work to be completed in order to document the emergency (include revisit the risk assessments).

In the case of a non medical emergency:
calling police. Include calling Trafford incident control where appropriate.

Fire: follow school fire procedures and gather at fire evacuation point. Raise the alarm in school if not already done so.

Strangers onsite: take children and adults to safe place in school, and alert office/police as required

Lost child: gather all children and check numbers. One adult to go back to class to see if the child is there with class teacher. Organise a search with other members of school leadership and follow missing child policy if required.

Emergency Action Plan – Off site woodland.

In event of an emergency :

Staff First aider to deal with the first aid emergency

One adult to call the relevant emergency services and then call the school 0161 905 0790 and inform the school head or SLT manager of the situation

In case of staff required to attend hospital with a child, the other member of staff will either return the group to school or await a member of staff to join the group to enable safe transportation- to be agreed according to the emergency by the Head or SLT manager.

All parents to be informed accordingly by the school staff.

All paper work to be completed in order to document the emergency (include revisit the risk assessments.

In the case of a non medical emergency:

Strangers/public interfering: take children and adults to safe place back to school, and alert office/police as required

Lost child: gather all children and check numbers. One adult to phone school and let SLT know of situation. One adult to look for child if safe to do so. Follow missing child policy and SLT leadership guidance includ

Sustainability

Staffing:

We aim to have the same Forest School leader and staff supporting children at their sessions. This provides a safe, sustainable environment in which the children can develop. In the case of staff absence or sickness we will endeavour to cover the provision, but ensure that this is done in a safe way that stays in line with Forest School policy.

Environmental:

We take pride in our school grounds. We vary the space we use for forest school sessions which not only provides a different learning space, but also means that the land can take a rest from footfall and play. This is needed particularly during the wet winter months. We have an environmental plan, which ensures that both flora and fauna are looked after. Our staff continually develop the outdoor spaces with the grounds of Lime Tree and do so with nature's needs at the forefront of their planning.

Resources:

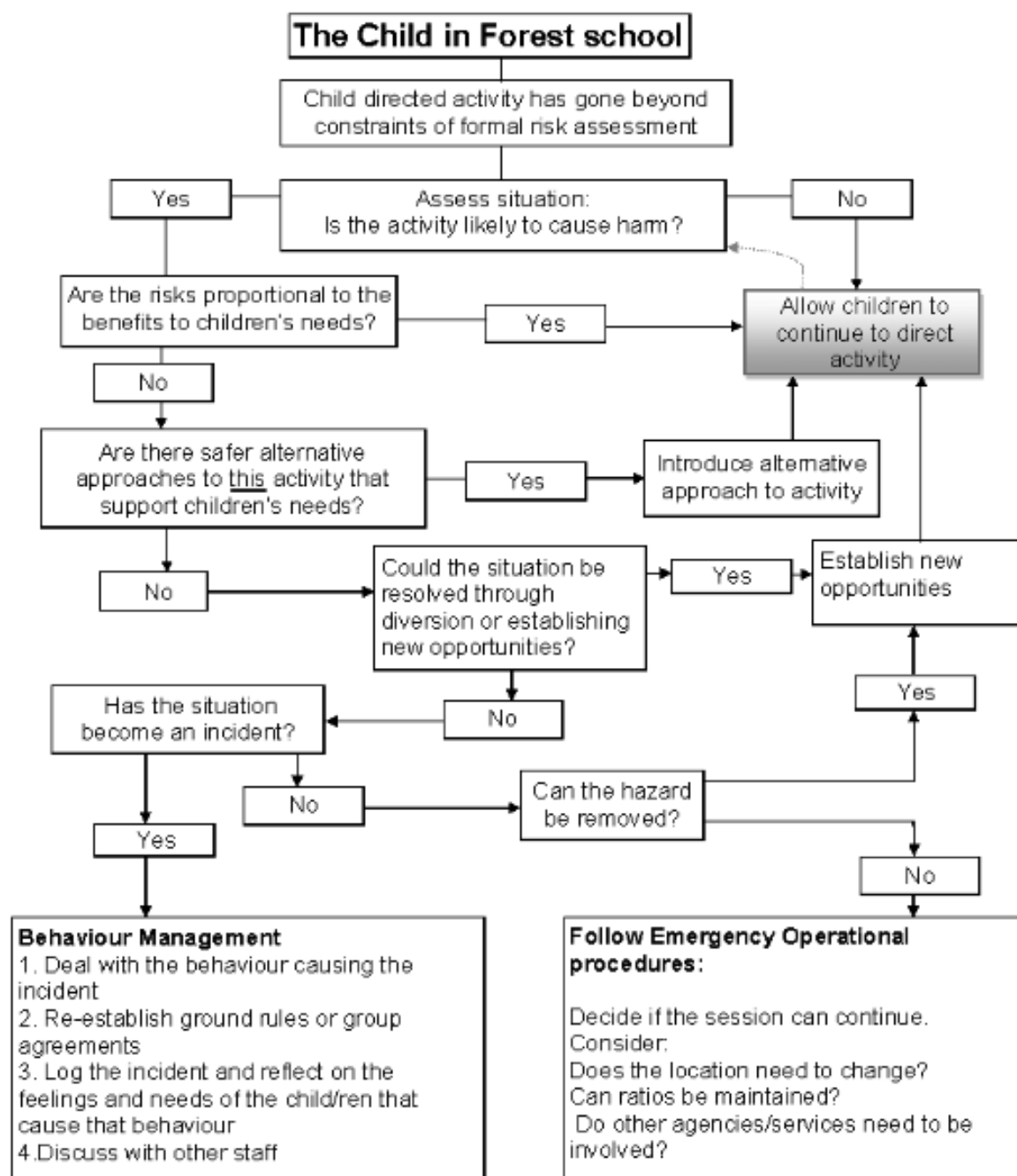
We think carefully about the resources we use within Forest School. We aim to reduce, reuse and recycle as much as possible. We always aim to buy in fire-wood from sustainable suppliers and use wood coppiced either onsite or locally for use within our sessions. We teach the children about the importance of looking after the environment both on a short and long-term basis and reflect this within our choice of materials used for creativity and play.

Therapeutic Forest

We deliver a weekly session of Therapeutic Forest within the school grounds. This is led by the forest school team and support by LSA's or TA's according to the needs with the group. This forms part of our intervention program within school, providing children with SEND and SEMH needs with a safe space to develop and grow. Using a combination of games, creativity and therapeutic approaches, the children are supported to develop their interpersonal and social skills. Our Forest School team are continuing their training and development in this area on an ongoing basis.

Appendix 1- Dynamic risk assessment

Used with kind permission from Lily Horseman of Kindlingplay



Original document by Dan Rees-Jones Playwork Partnerships 2008
Adapted by Lily Horseman and BEYCP Play Team July 2008

Adapted for Forest Schools by Kindling www.kindlingplayandtraining.co.uk 2011

Appendix 2 – parent information – held with in the parent and teacher leaflet

What should be worn at Forest school?

All children, leaders and volunteers are expected to wear the following when attending Forest school sessions. We go outside in all weather apart from high winds or thunder storms, so all need to be equipped correctly for the sessions. Without these, then the participant may be refused to take part in the activities.



Footwear

Welly boots or waterproof walking boots



Summer time

A light waterproof coat (we have some of these available for use)

Sun cream and sun hat

Waterproof trousers (we have some available for use)



Winter time

A warm, waterproof coat

A wooly hat and gloves

Waterproof trousers (we have some available for use)

Appendix 3 - Forest School consent

When your child starts school at Lime Tree, we will ask you to sign a consent form so that your child can attend forest school and outdoor learning sessions. This consent is available on the parent-pay platform. Please speak to the school office staff if you have any questions regarding access to this.

Forest School and Outdoor Learning

At Lime Tree we believe that getting the children outside of the classroom to learn is an essential part of their education. It is important that the children are prepared for their outdoor learning sessions both physically and mentally.

As part of the curriculum at Lime Tree your child will take part in forest school and outdoor learning opportunities. Sometimes this will include your child visiting local parks and woodland by minibus. Notice of such trips will be given via parent letters from the class teacher. Consent forms for these local visits will require completion and returning before the deadlines.

In order for your child's learning to be at its best, it is expected that parents and carers provide a pair of wellington boots and spare socks (to be kept in school) and a practical warm, waterproof coat for your child to wear at outdoor sessions.

Please can you provide old playing out clothes when requested and understand that these may come home wet and muddy after outdoor sessions. The outdoor team will provide waterproof trousers for your child where possible, but your child may still get wet and muddy during their play.

At times the children will attend off site spaces where there are no toilets. Therefore, a child may need to have a "nature wee". The Outdoor team follow the guidance in the toileting policy when offsite.

During forest school activities, there may be times that your child has the opportunity to use tools and outdoor equipment as part of their learning. They will also learn to light fires and to cook on fires. These activities will be age related and will always be supervised by qualified Forest School practitioners during these times, who adhere to the Forest School, Fire and Tool policy which are all available on our school website.

Please can you sign the attached form providing consent for your child to take part in this activity, which forms part of their learning curriculum throughout their school journey at Lime Tree. Please arrange to come in and speak to us should you have any questions, or wish for any clarification about our Forest School and outdoor learning opportunities at Lime Tree.

Mrs J Green
Forest School Leader

I give permission for for my child to take part in Forest School Sessions

Child's Name: _____

Registration Group: _____

Parent signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 4 - Volunteer & support staff documents

Sample Support staff training session

Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan: Forest school ethos and role of support in the woods			
Date:	Time: 3-5pm	Duration: 2hours	Site: Lime Tree Forest school area
Course: Volunteers and FS support staff		Subject: Forest school	
No. of students: 10		Topic: Introduction	
Lesson aims (teachers intentions)			
Introduction to forest school - ethos and expectations for supporting staff			
Is previous knowledge assumed?			
No			
Resources: creative box, refreshments, first aid kit, pens and paper, waterproofs,			
Assessment method (how each learning outcome will be assessed)			
reflective practice throughout session			
Notes on differentiation/equal opportunities/skills developed			
Use of creative, verbal, and written skills during the session. Options for people to write or not write, share verbally with the whole group or not according to confidence levels (which are currently unknown for 2 individuals)			

Time/ stage	Subject matter/content	Teacher activity	Student activity	Resource/notes/and differentiation
3pm	Drinks in the lodge	Welcome individuals	Get a drink and intros	Hot drinks
3.10pm	Welcome and introductions – what we do here at Lime Tree – share personal outdoor experiences	Present to the group	introductions and personal outdoor experiences	
3.25pm	Why we want to get children outside & why forest school	Discussion & FS ethos and principles (handouts)	Fill in sheet – Why get children outside?	Hand out

3.40pm	Forest school taster session for adults	See handout		
4.20pm	comfort break			
4.25pm	Review session, ethos, risks and discuss roles and responsibilities	lead discussion	group discussion	Drinks in the lodge post it notes and flip chart
5pm	close			



Lime Tree Primary Academy Volunteer Informal Interview

Conducted by _____

Volunteer name _____

School Information to relay to candidate	
3 months/term and then review how things are going – come and catch myself or key stage lead for a chat about whether to continue	
Safeguarding Children – Duty of care to report concerns and disclosures- Level 1 Safeguarding when appropriate	
Confidentiality – e.g. Child/teacher tells you something, remaining professional and not repeating	
Health and Safety tour/key information	
Professional Conduct and attire – trousers/shoes/shirt/appropriate kits for lessons e.g. PE kit, Forest schools wellies etc.	
Children's behaviour – Modelled by the teacher and all adults treated equally and listened to	
Issues or concerns – speak to class teacher, key stage leader and then myself	

Candidate Information	
What days and times are preferable?	
What is the Class/Year group placement and is this sufficient?	
What do you wish to bring to the placement in terms of skills? What new things do you want to experience or try?	
What do you want to develop or get out of the placement by the end?	

Signature of volunteer _____ Date _____



Lime Tree Primary School
Budworth Road, Sale,
Cheshire M33 2RP
T 0161 925 0790

office@limetree.trafford.sch.uk
www.limetree.trafford.sch.uk
Head of School: Clare Larkin
Executive Principal: Simon Bewick

Roles and responsibilities of support staff and volunteers within Forest School.

Overview of Duties:

To support the Forest School Leader, working with a group of 10-14 children aged between 3 and 11 years of age (dependent on session). Help in setting up, running the session and clearing away of equipment. Help in the assessment and management of health and safety throughout session. Support children in their play within the woodland setting. You will be given opportunities to add and contribute ideas to the content of sessions; and to support the reviewing process after each session. To learn how to safely use tools and light a fire so as to support students during sessions, always under the instruction and supervision of the level 3 forest school leader.

Personal attributes needed:

- Be over 18 years old
- Have a desire to learn about the Forest School ethos.
- Adhere to all Forest School Risk assessments and policies
- Be enthusiastic and happy to work outside in all types of weather.
- Have good communication skills
- Love the natural world and enjoy working with children
- Have a clear, current DBS check (completed through the school) and provide two references
- Adhere to safeguarding policies and procedures and always liaise with the level 3 FS leader regarding individual child needs. To understand and work within the schools confidentiality policy.
- Wear suitable clothing for the outdoors (we have some spare waterproofs if required)
- Be willing to get your hands and feet muddy!

Training will be provided within the first 3 months of volunteering (school support staff will also have the opportunity to be part of this training). Attendance at this training and safeguarding level 1 training is an essential requirement. There may be some flexibility if you are already enrolled on level 2 or 3 forest school training in another setting. Until taking part in the training session and having the agreed level of competence, tools and fire practice must only be observed during sessions.

Preferred:

- Experience of working with children.
- Have experience in a wildlife/woodland working environment