



New Mills Primary School

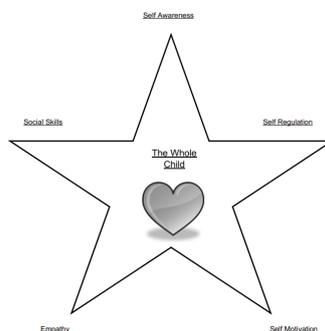
Forest Schools Handbook

Welcome to Forest Schools at New Mills Primary School. This Handbook will provide you with everything you need to know about our Forest Schools programme. It includes practical information about our site and what we do, along with information about the benefits of a Forest Schools approach for your children. We hope you find this information useful. Photos of our activities and sessions are included on the school website.

Our Forest School Ethos

Our Forest School is a learner driven natural learning environment. This space will enable learners to work within and outside of their comfort zones in activities which help them understand themselves, the natural world and how their choices and actions impact on their relationship with others. Learners in our Forest School will feel safe through challenge, having learned to assess their own boundaries and risks. Learners will be encouraged to use their Forest School experiences to help them better understand their sense of self as well as their learning needs, patterns and behaviours in more formal educational settings.

The Forest School ethos is driven by a desire to help children develop their sense of self as represented by the Forest School Star:



Location and Maps

We are lucky to have a woodland onsite in the school grounds. The area lies entirely within the school site and behind perimeter fencing. NMPS is located in the heart of the town next to the Adult Education Centre and next to a number of areas of housing which include the school catchment. The site has views over Kinder and down to the Goyt Valley, enabling children to have a sense of place in their local environment.

Map showing outline of NMPS grounds. Access is from Meadow Street



Map showing location of Woodland within the school grounds



The woodland has 3 main areas

1. Central Woodland with boundary hedging – This is the original woodland site
2. Outer woodland – This is an area of woodland which can be accessed from the central area. It has recently been partly cleared to make it accessible and has larger trees and a den building area included within it
3. Poly tunnel and Edible Garden – This is next to the woodland and has its own boundary fencing
4. Wildlife Pond

The four areas provide a very flexible space which can be restricted or opened depending on the age and size of the group.

What is Outdoor Education at New Mills Primary School?

At NMPS we understand that children need outdoor play and activity opportunities in order to develop a connection with the natural world, good physical literacy and a strong sense of self which they can use to develop health relationships with others. Outdoor activities help to facilitate better quality classroom learning sessions. Outdoor education includes a variety of activities which can be spontaneous as well as planned and take place in a variety of group sizes. Outdoor education is most often adult led, and curriculum linked. Recent examples include:

- Whole class natural sculpture making
- Scavenger hunts and orienteering
- Outdoor active maths sessions
- Nature identification
- Team building challenges
- Outdoor individual crafts using natural materials
- Woodland play sessions

What is Forest Schools at New Mills Primary School?

Forest Schools at NMPS is a targeted regular woodland session with a specific group of children. Sessions at least 2 hours long and take place as a block of work (normally 6 weeks). Sessions are child led and are designed to encourage children to work together often outside of their comfort zone in a range of play related activities. Types of play can include:

Rough and Tumble – with others and with nature

Playing at height – tree climbing

Out of Sight – away from but not disconnected from adult supervision

Play with tools – This can be creating tools from the natural world or can be use of real-world tools such as saws and knives (adult supervised)

Elemental play – with water, mud and activities around the campfire

Forest School sessions are designed to help children reach the point where they are in 'deep play', a state where they are totally engrossed in their activity, building relationships and a sense of community with other learners. Adults in a Forest School session facilitate these activities.

For more information on the history of Forest Schools please visit:

<https://www.forestschoools.com/pages/what-is-forest-school-an-introduction>

Aims and Objectives of Forest Schools at NMPS

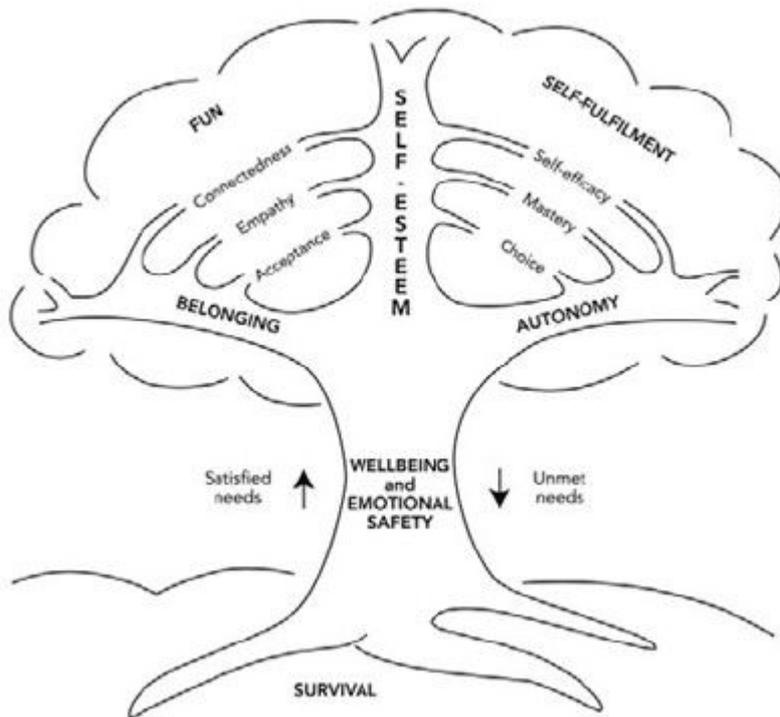
Our aims include:

- Development of fine and gross motor skills
- Building self confidence
- Raising self esteem
- Development of communication and language
- Developing resilience
- Developing social skills such as leadership, decision making, sharing and empathy
- Building respect for and understanding of nature
- Becoming a problem solver
- Developing creativity and imagination
- Promote mental health
- Building a community and a sense of belonging

All activities are learner led and facilitated by adults. Some of the activities our children have chosen to take part in include:

- Child led play and exploration
- Woodland Crafts
- Team Games
- Fire activities

- Campfire Cooking
- Shelter building
- Rope play
- Tree climbing and slackline
- Woodland conservation
- Nature Art
- Storytelling and Role play
- Problem solving and team challenges
- Embracing mud



Information for Parents

Forest School sessions within school hours are part of school provision delivered by school staff and there is no charge. Forest School After School Clubs are outside of curriculum time and are delivered by Being Outdoors an external provider. There is a charge for these sessions which can be booked through:

<https://beingoutdoorsorg.wordpress.com/about/why-being-outdoors/>

What does your child need to bring?

Children are more likely to feel confident to participate in all activities if they are warm and dry. In general, we ask that your child comes with their arms and legs covered so that they are free to crawl and explore as much as they want. Long sleeves also mean fewer worries about sun cream or ticks which can sometimes be found in the woods in the summer.

We therefore ask that you provide the following for your child for each session:

Warm layers (long sleeved top, fleece, coat)

Waterproofs – Trousers, waterproof coat or all in one suit

Warm boots or wellies

Waterproof gloves and warm hat (no scarves please they get in the way!)

A change of clothes for after the session – this may be their school uniform

Contingency Plans

On very rare occasions it is unsafe for us to use the woodland due to high winds and the risk of tree branches causing injury. In this case the session may take place indoors or in another area of the school grounds which is safer.

Practical Procedures for each session

Bags and coats

Bags will be left in the classroom or in the case of After School Club, in the hall. Clothing removed during a session will be kept undercover and dry

Toilets

There is no toilet within the woodland. All sessions will use the KS2 toilets between year 4 and year 5 classrooms. Older children can use these toilets independently, KS1 children will need an adult with them to visit the toilets.

Register

A register must be taken at the start of each session to ensure all children are present. The register will indicate medical needs such as inhalers, allergies and food preferences.

See Appendix 1: Register

Inhalers and medication

All inhalers are kept in draw string bags in each classroom. Children attending After school club must bring their inhalers with them – leaders to check this. If inhalers are used during the session, leaders must inform parents of this at pick up time. If inhalers are used during curriculum sessions, leaders must inform class teacher at the end of the session so that information can be passed to parents.

Forest School leaders should not give medication to children during the session. If medication is required, arrangements should be made with the school office for that medicine to be administered by a trained member of staff or the child's parent.

Hygiene

Your child will get muddy at Forest Schools. However, leaders will ensure good hand hygiene before snacks or campfire cooking takes place. This may include washing hands at a hand washing station in the woods, or using wipes and hand gel where appropriate.

Pick-ups

For After School sessions, parents must indicate on booking who will be collecting their child after the session. If there are changes to arrangements, then a message must be sent to the school office before 3pm on the day of the session. Pick-ups will be made from the main school gates

Consent Forms

For after school club, parents must fill out a consent form for their child to take part in Forest School Activities. This should cover the academic year.

Procedures and Policies for Forest School Staff, Parents and Stakeholders

Procedures for the smooth running of Forest School sessions are outlined below. In some areas, the school has an existing policy in place and therefore relevant sections of that policy have been included in the context that they apply to Forest Schools. In some cases, the whole policy is relevant and as such these have been included in the Appendices section.

1. Attendance and Admissions

Register

A register of learners should be taken at the start of each session before you leave the school building. Checks should be made on allergies, inhalers and new starters. Contact the office prior to each session to see if there are any different pick-up arrangements for any children.

Brief to group – ground rules

At the start of each session, the group should agree ground rules for their time in the woods. These may differ depending on the ground conditions, weather, size of group and types of learners. There may be ongoing values based ground rules such as kindness to others, sharing etc. but there may also be more practical ground rules such as limitations on area of roaming, agreement on a call for the children to come back to the base etc.

Once ground rules for the session are agreed, it is useful for leaders and learners to carry out a check of the woods together. This can include any checks for what has changed in the woods since our last visit, checks for faeces or dangerous trees etc. This process will start the process whereby learners risk assess their own environment as they play.

2. Health and Safety

Litter

The woodland should be checked for litter every day. Any litter should be brought back to the fire circle and put in the bin by the hall door. Faeces should be double bagged and disposed of immediately. If any child has been sick during the session, the whole amount

must be bagged up and kept in case sickness was caused by something they had eaten in the woodland.

What to take with you

Please refer to the following mandatory and suggested lists of equipment for each session:

Essential equipment

Inhalers/Epipens
First Aid Kit including burns kit
Fire Blanket
Bucket of water for fire
Bucket for handwashing
Soap in a sock
Fire Gloves
Wipes
Hand Sanitiser
Paper Towel
Mobile Phone

Optional Equipment

Craft activities
Snacks
Drinks
Tools
String
Ropes

Storage of equipment

All tools such as knives, loppers and saws must be kept in the woodland shed and locked away when not in use. During the session in which they will be used, tools must be kept in a suitable bag at the fire circle and must be supervised by an adult at all times.

Broken equipment or damage

All mud kitchen equipment must be checked prior to each session to check for sharp edges and breakages. All damaged equipment should be removed immediately and reported via the staff WhatsApp group.

Tools

Tools should be used in small groups. Before using any tool, children should be given the appropriate 'Tool Talk' for that item. Children should wear gloves on their helper hand where appropriate. Children should be supervised at all times when using tools. Tools we may use with children include: Bowsaw, Billhook, Sheath knife, Power and hand drills and

loppers. We should reinforce the idea that they are tools not weapons. Tools are used to facilitate an activity and are brought out if and when they are required and only used when a child can demonstrate sufficient skills and maturity to use them for the task in hand.

When not in use, tool should be kept in the onsite tool box and after any session they should be locked in the woodland shed out of reach of children.

Tools should be checked and sharpened at regular intervals to ensure they are safe and fit for purpose.

Leaders should carry an inventory of woodland tools, their age, type and number to ensure none go missing or are used for longer than their natural life span.

Siting and use of Fire

Fire should be used sparingly during Forest School sessions. A balance should be struck between the positive benefits of fire work, lighting and cooking and the negative aspects of burning wood in an open environment with the associated particulate smoke. If a fire is to be part of the session, children should understand the negative aspects of burning as well as its uses.

The Forest School fire should be located in an open area where seating is at least 1.5m from the edge of the fire pit. The fire pit should either be clay lined or a raised bowl due to soil conditions in the area. If using a clay pit, the pit should be edged with logs or stones.

FS Leaders must supervise the fire at all times. Learners must ask permission to enter the fire circle. and the number of learners next to the fire should be limited to prevent accidents. There should be no running or rough and tumble play near the fire pit area.

Leaders must have the following items next to the fire:

Fire blankets

Bucket of water

Burns kit

Fire glove – this should be used to add fuel to the fire

The fire should be made and fuelled from wood found in the woodland and should not extend over the sides of the fire pit or bowl. No more fuel should be added to the fire 15 minutes before the end of the session and at the end of the session the fire should be extinguished by first spreading out the embers then by using a bucket of water to make sure all coals are completely cold before leaving site. The fire pit should be checked 30 minutes after the end of the session to ensure it is completely extinguished.

All learners and leaders using the fire should adopt the respect position.

The nature of our site means that it is not possible to move fire pit sites very often however, suitable places for the fire pit include, the circle area within the main woods, flat grass next to the pond or flat grass on the top playground.

3. Hygiene

Toilets

Children should not be asked to wait to go to the toilet. Cold weather can make their need to go more urgent than normal. For KS2 children they can be sent in pairs to the KS2 toilets. For KS1, they should be supervised by an adult to go to the KS2 toilets. We should encourage children to tell us they are going to the toilet but not to ask for permission.

Hand washing

Children will be encouraged to wash their hands before eating anything in the woods and after visiting the toilet. At other times we will encourage children to have dirty hands – this will help their connection with the natural world and will benefit their immune system. Hand washing facilities will either be provided in the school building or in the woodland itself (bowl of water, towel etc.)

Food Hygiene/ Allergies

Parents and Carers of all learners must inform FS staff of allergies before the session (consent form). FS leaders will take account of individual allergies and make provision for them in the creation of snacks and drinks. All preparation of food in the woods will follow the schools Food Hygiene policy.

Healthy Eating

Children will be encouraged to bring healthy snacks to woodland sessions and will be encouraged to try foraged snacks prepared by FS leaders. Sessions will be delivered in line with the schools Healthy Eating Policy.

4. Date Protection and Child Protection

Photo policy

Every September, parents complete a photo permission form to say if their children can be photographed for displays or social media. A list of children who cannot be photographed is available from the school office. Please check your photo permissions at the start of each block of FS work. Children who cannot be photographed, can have an emoji over their face in a photo for social media.

Safeguarding

For full guidance on Safeguarding please refer to the school Safeguarding policy. All concerns about safeguarding should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer.

5. Incident Planning

Incident reports

For after school club, minor injuries should be communicated to parents at the end of the session. For curriculum sessions, minor injuries should be reported to class teachers via a 'bump note' from the first aid kit. This should include information such as type of injury, how it was sustained, and first aid given.

Fire alarms, Emergency Action Plan and Lockdown

Fire drills will be held every term and information about their frequency will be circulated on the staff WhatsApp group. Muster point for Fire Drill is the middle area of the KS2 playground. A register must be taken and reported to the Fire Safety officer in the event of a fire drill. In the event of a lockdown, the group should stay in the woodland with the gate closed. Children should be asked to remain quiet until lockdown is lifted.

Medicines

FS leaders will operate under the schools Medicines Policy. FS leaders will not give regular medication to children during their session (apart from inhalers). If a child requires regular medication, the parent will be required to be present to give the child the medication at the allotted time.

Emergency Action Plan

See attached document

6. Special Education Needs

At New Mills Primary School, we value the abilities and achievements of all our pupils, and we are committed to providing, for each pupil, the best possible environment for Learning. All teachers in our school are teachers of all children, including those with SEND. We work hard to ensure every child achieves their full potential, and encourage all children to have high aspirations. When working with children with SEN we are focussed on supporting children to achieve their very best possible outcomes. Within a Forest School context, we take SEN considerations into account in the planning and delivery of our sessions but Forest School is often an environment where children with SEN thrive in a way that they may not in the classroom.

7. Whistle Blowing and bullying

In line with the School's commitment to high standards of openness, integrity and accountability, the School expects employees who have a reasonable belief that malpractice is taking place within the School to come forward and voice those concerns internally. This may be an awareness of suspected irregularity, wrongdoing or a failure of standards. This Behaviour and Whistleblowing Code provides the means for employees to make such disclosures.

An employee, parent or stakeholder concerns about malpractice may include a reasonable belief that one or more of the following has occurred or is likely to occur:

- Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law,
- Miscarriages of justice,
- Health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees,
- Damage to the environment,
- The unauthorised use of public funds,
- Fraud and corruption,
- Sexual or Physical abuse of pupils,
- Other unethical conduct.

Under this code employees, parents or stakeholder should make disclosures about possible malpractice to:

- The Head teacher
- Where this is inappropriate, the Chair of Governors.
- Where both of these are inappropriate, The Director of Children's Services or the Assistant Director of Finance (Audit Services).

It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. For full details please see the school Behavior and Whistleblowing policy.

8. Play

We believe that we can make a very positive contribution to children's lives by valuing their urge and desire to play and providing for a broad range of play opportunities within the school's playground before, during and after the school day.

This school recognises that children will naturally create and/or seek out challenging situations; while making the most of their play some children may have accidents, get dirty or wet or upset. We recognise that any potential risk of harm to children needs to be balanced with the potential

for good that may come from their taking part in a particular form of play. We will do our best to avoid children coming to serious physical or emotional harm by carefully managing the play opportunities that we provide.

In the context of Forest Schools, we will offer a range of 'risky play' opportunities including:

Play at Speed – tig games

Out of Sight Play – Play out of sight of an adult

Play at Height – Tree climbing

Rough and Tumble Play

Elemental Play – with water, fire and mud

All these types of play will be offered in a safe environment where a child can learn to push themselves from their comfort zone into types of play described as 'Frontier'. These play experiences help a child to develop the social, physical and emotional strengths which make Forest Schools so valuable.

9. Equal Opportunities

NMPS Equality policy states that schools cannot unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation. Within Forest Schools all children will be given the same choices and not discriminated against on any grounds. Where activities are offered but are not easily accessed by learners with physical disabilities, FS leaders will do their utmost to adapt the activity or environment to meet the needs of the learner.

For full details please see the schools Equality Policy.

10. Grievance, complaints and disciplinary

NMPS has adopted a comprehensive disciplinary procedure policy which outlines how and when complaints against staff should be made and the process for dealing with these complaints. The policy states that:

'This summary of the policy and procedure does not stand alone, it is essential to adopt the policy in its entirety and follow the requirements set out in Part 2 Implementation and Guidance, which provides more detail of the process.'

As such, for information regarding disciplinary and complaints, the full policy must be viewed.

11. Behaviour

We believe that a positive school ethos is one of the most important elements in promoting the best delivery of the curriculum for all our children; it develops happy and healthy attitudes towards everyone in our school.

All children at New Mills Primary School are expected to be friendly, polite and respectful of each other as well as to Staff and visitors. Consideration for others is at the root of our expectations of the relationship between children and children, children and adults and adults and adults. All staff and pupils in our school share the same values.

We expect the best conduct in and around school at all times and we also expect our pupils to behave in the same way. The behaviour policy at NMPS is based very much on indoor behaviour, which in our society is considered to be different to outdoor behaviour. All Forest School sessions will have ground rules set at the start of each session. These mirror the whole school rules.

Rules/expectations Forest School sessions

- Care for others and treat them as you would like to be treated.
- Be polite to everyone and do as you are asked.
- Have lovely manners.
- Greet others in passing (modelled by members of staff).
- Put litter in the bins.
- Try to do your best at all times.
- Always tell the truth.
- Hand in mobile phones to the class teacher (Y6 only; no phones for the younger children)
- Report bullying or unkind behaviour to school adults.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Register of learners

Appendix 2 - Phase One Survey – see attachment

Appendix 3 - Impact Assessment – see attachment

Appendix 4 - 3 Year Woodland Management Plan – see attachment

Appendix 5 – Risk Benefit analysis – see attachment

Appendix 6 – Emergency Action Plan – see attachment

Appendix 7 – Example Session Plan – see below

Appendix 8 – Session Checklist – see below

Appendix 1 – Register of learners

Name	Class	Inhaler needed?	Allergies	Emergency Contact details	Picked up by?

Appendix 7 – Example Session Plan

Year group: Year 1

WEEK 2

Date:

Session Planning checklist
What are the OBJECTIVES?
I feel confident exploring the woodland and understand the boundaries of play and behaviour I can explore the smells of the woodland and experiment with combining them I am aware of the natural work and have an understanding of how I can help protect it
What is your THEME, how will this be developed?
SMELLING The theme for the session is exploring the smells in the woods. Identifying different smells and describing them. What happens when you mix them?
What EXPERIENCES are you going to offer? How might learners develop their own direction?
The children will be offered the opportunity to make a jam jar potion. They will be encouraged to collect different smells from the woods and combine them into a potion. They will be encouraged to mix the potion with their fingers or make a modified tool. There is the option of suggesting to the children that they set up a potion shop or similar group play activity. The children will have the freedom to explore the woods, select ingredients and combine them as they wish.

What SEQUENCE could they follow?

The sequence of activities for this is totally learner led. Some children will want to collect and make as they go along, others will want to collect, bring back to a central point then create their potion.

It would make sense for the learners to be brought together at the end of the session to discuss their choices for their potions.

Will they have a logical BUILD UP OF UNDERSTANDING? For the learner?

The activities will enable learners to start with a wider exploration of the woods which develops a wide sense of place and boundaries.

Children will be encouraged to experiment with different smells and ingredients. They may make a number of different potions before they find one that they like. Some children may want to use larger containers and tools for their potion or make it a group activity. This will build their understanding of what works for them and what doesn't.

The free play session will give learners the chance to put their exploration into practice through play.

How are you going to get your learners HOOKED and MOTIVATED?

Learners will be hooked through the poem of the day, they will be motivated by the idea of creating something magical and messy. They will be motivated by the activity being guided but their choice.

What LEARNING METHODS will the activities involve?

The learning methods will be both adult led and peer supported. They will be encouraged to work with others to experiment with smells and ingredients.

How will this sequence affect the ENERGY FLOWS?

The free flow form of the session should ensure that energy within the group remains high. For learners who struggle to focus on an independent activity or those who are used to being adult led, the activities offer the opportunity for leaders to start a learner off with something but then to withdraw to enable them to get on with it independently.

REVIEW**How will your learners REMEMBER the important points?**

Circle time review of learning points will take place at the end of the session. Learners will be asked to describe their potions and the smells which went into it.

How will you ensure REFLECTION and TRANSFER?

We will keep the potions for the following week to discuss at the start of the next session. The children will be able to reflect on what they did the previous week and apply some of the learning to the next session.

How will you EVALUATE whether the objectives have been met?

Through ongoing observation of the group, reflective diary and individual studies of 3 children in the group

Are there any special HEALTH AND SAFETY issues relating to the site, activity or group?
No SEN issues within the group. Open boundary of the woodland monitored by staff during the session
Have you reviewed your RISK ASSESSMENT for the site, activity and group?
None of the activities affect or change the standard risk assessment for the site. No individual children require risk assessments
What are your CONTINGENCY/WET WEATHER plans
The woods have good canopy cover and so this session can be delivered in most weathers. In high winds, the activity could take place in the wider school grounds away from the risk of falling or breaking trees.

Appendix 8 - Session Checklist

Item to check	Check	Notes
Register complete		
Pick up arrangements clarified with office		
First Aid Kit with burns		
Inhalers/Epipens		
Hand washing facilities		
Fire blanket and bucket of water		
Mobile Phone		
Photo permissions		