



Forest School Handbook

Policies and Procedures

Ysgol Maes Owen



Y Foryd



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1- Code of Conduct

Clothing

Forest school takes place in all weathers apart from high winds. You will need to dress warmly in old clothes that will be suitable for the weather conditions. Forest school is run all year round and we are likely to get wet and muddy through out the year.

Maes Owen site

We will enter the site respectfully and understand that when using the site school expectations are in place. We will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our woodland area. We understand that this is a shared place with plants and animals and that when we are in our are of forest school we are sharing that environment with them.

Boundaries

Before each session begins we will be made aware of our fixed boundary markers. The forest school are allows for clear vision but this may be limited at times due to seasonal growth. If we hear the call "1 2, 3, where are you?" We will respond "1, 2, 3, I'm here"

School Values

During forest school we will remember to use out Y Foryd Values :

Gentle Hands, Kind words, Listening, showing respect to everyone and doing our very best.

Lighting a fire

When we have a fire, the Forest School Leader will take full control of the activity and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we begin. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that the fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire circle and will be securely dampened after use with the fire site cleared and made safe. (Ref Fire risk assessment)

At the Fire circle

An open fire will be lit within a fire square. A fire circle will be established around the perimeter which should be 1.5m from the fire square. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. No running is permitted past the fire circle and no items must be carried and paced within the fire circle unless by an adult. If we wish to move around the fire to a new seating spot we must step out of the circle and move carefully around the outside of the circle. Even if the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit. (Ref Fire risk assessment)

Use of Tools

When we use tools they will be introduced and fully supervised by the Forest School Leader. All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific PPE which will be supplied if needed. Correct use of a specific body posture and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. When not being used the tools will be kept in a locked tool box under the full supervision of the Forest School Leader. (Ref tool use risk assessment)

Picking up and playing with sticks

We can pick up, collect and carry sticks shorter than our arm's length but we will be encouraged to think about how close we are to other children. Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living trees. Longer sticks are readily available on the woodland floor for use in shelter and den building.

Picking up and playing with stones

We may pick up, collect and transport stones within the Forest School area to make patterns and pictures. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it? All stones should be carefully returned after use to limit ecological impact and endangering of animal habitats.

Ecological impact: returning items

Following play with sticks, stones and natural resources, we will return these items to where they were collected from to limit disruption to small animal and invertebrate breeding and nesting. We will be encouraged to develop ideas of caring for the natural environment and limiting our ecological footprint to ensure the Forest School site remains a haven for fauna and flora.

Ecological impact: removing litter

We will be encouraged to think about the dangers for wildlife, flora and fauna of littering the natural environment and we will be encouraged to help to carefully remove any items of litter found and we will not add litter to this site.

Digging

We will not dig large holes but we may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using lollypop sticks, fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made as it will disrupt the habitat of the site.

Collecting wood

We may collect wood for fire lighting purposes in four thicknesses – matchstick, pencil, thumb and wrist sized. Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats. Unused wood should be returned after use.

Rope and String Use

We encourage careful rope, string and knot use and do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up a tarp or a swing, an adult will help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and will talk through ideas and decisions while encouraging children to problem solve for themselves.

Carrying and Transporting Materials

We are encouraged to roll, lift, drag and to pull materials, either by using our hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

2– Daily Procedures

Before the session

- The site will be checked for any hazards and these will be removed.
- A session plan form will be completed, taking into account observations, interest areas and learning points from previous sessions. All adults will read the session plan form prior to the session.
- Activity risk assessment forms will be completed/ updated for each planned activity. All adults will read the forms relevant to a particular session before it starts.
- All staff will have read the latest Site Risk Assessment, which will be relevant to the current season.
- The Forest School Leader will check that enough adults are present for the session to go ahead and that the weather conditions allow it to take place.
- A daily risk assessment will be completed.
- The equipment required for the session will be assembled, checked and prepared ready for taking to the site.
- All children will be registered by their class teacher. They will then get changed for Forest school and use the toilet.

During the session

- A headcount will be undertaken on arrival at the forest school site and whenever the group is brought back together.
- Risks will be continually assessed and appropriate action taken to reduce or remove risks found.

After the session

- A headcount will be undertaken at the end of the session.
- If the tool box has been taken to the site, the contents will be checked by the Forest School Leader to ensure no items are missing.
- After the children have left the site the Forest School Leader will clean, check and maintain tools as required. The tool box will then be locked.
- A session evaluation will be completed by the Forest School Leader along with any observational records that will be useful to the class teacher.

Eating and Drinking

We will not eat anything found at the forest school site unless this activity has been specifically planned for during that session (blackberry picking, apple cooking) Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When we have drinks and snacks we will use a designated wash station with water and environmentally safe soap provided to clean hands before consumption.

Toileting

The children are invited to use the toilet before we leave the school building. As we are on a secure school site the toilet available should they be needed.

Tree climbing

Tree climbing is permitted on the site. An adult will check the woodland floor for sharp objects and check for loose or rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough but far enough away to not be invasive to the children's exploration

Leaving Maes Owen Site

Our aim is to leave no trace that we were in the site as much as is reasonably possible. Shelters will be taken down and imported materials removed. Occasionally large items may be left between sessions. All rubbish and litter will always be removed. The fire pit will be dampened and returned to natural state. If artefacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of an adult.

3 – Fire Procedures

Campfires are a highlight of Forest School and will only be used once the children have been introduced to the safety procedures and the Forest School Leader is confident they can participate with as little risk as possible to their health.

Location of fire

- The campfire will take place in the fire circle and will be enclosed by a square of logs to prevent the spread of the fire.

Fire Safety Rules

1. Ratio of 1 adult : 1 fire
2. Fire area is surrounded by a boundary of at least 1.5m from the fire pit or Kelly Kettle.
3. Children will sit on logs outside this boundary.
4. Children must walk around the outside of the seating area, and step over them to sit down. A fire will not be lit with a group until all children have demonstrated that they do this at all times.
5. When the fire is in use children are not permitted within the fire circle unless they are invited by the adult.
6. Children are not permitted to throw anything onto the fire.
7. Children will be taught how to change seats by standing, stepping over the log and then walking around the outside of the seating area. They must never cross the inner area.
8. Advice on the appropriate way for dealing with smoke will be given to the children: they are advised to turn their head to one side, placing their hand across the face, to close their eyes and count to 30 (or ask an adult/peer to count for them)

9. If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided.
10. Ensure water is available for extinguishing.
11. Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn with no loose clothing or hair.

Safety and Responsibility

1. Only adults are permitted to light fires, unless children are under the direct supervision of the Forest School Leader.
2. Fires are lit using cotton wool and a fire striker.
3. No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
4. No plastics are to be burnt.
5. If sessions involve children adding fuel to the fire, this must be done with one to one adult supervision.
6. Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go over the fire.
7. A Fire Blanket, bucket of water and Burns kit must be sited close to the camp. Cling film is carried in the emergency rucksack

Extinguishing

1. All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.
2. Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.
3. Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash.
4. At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.
5. Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered through the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Kelly Kettles

1. Only adults are to light the fire in the fire pan unless children are under the direct supervision of the Forest School Leader.
2. The kelly kettle must be placed on flat, clear ground or paving slab.
3. Children must be seated at least 1.5 meters away from the kelly kettle.
4. Children can feed the fire with one to one supervision but they must have been shown how to do so safely. (stick held at the end and dropped in from the side; hand should never be placed over the top of the kettle).
5. Fuel should burn itself out, but if it doesn't it must be extinguished with water .
6. Kelly kettles should never be boiled with the cork in.
7. Kettles should only be removed from fire by an adult wearing fire safety gloves (hold each side of handle and lift off. Take care not to put hand above chimney of kettle or over spout).
8. Only adults will put the kettle on and take it off the fire bowl.

4 – Tools and PPE

Children will not be using tools until they are ready, this will be assessed by the Forest School leader.

The following tools could be used during Forest School sessions.

- Bow saw
- Palm drill
- Mora Clippers (Whittling knives)
- Whittling peelers
- Scissors
- Secateurs
- Loppers
- Mallets

Tools are used with adult 1:1 supervision only.

The Forest School Leader is responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools. A list of the items stored in the tool box is attached to the box and used as a checklist to ensure that all items are returned safely at the end of each session.

A designated area will be marked out for when tools are in use and children will be taught rules including: never walking with tools, a correct stance to follow and to ensure a blood bubble is around them. The children will also be taught to check their tools before use and will be shown how to fit guard to the tools if required. Gloves are available as personal protection equipment when needed and will only be worn on the non-tool hand.

The tool box is kept locked when not in use. The Forest School leader is responsible for the safe keeping of the key. The tool box is kept locked and taken off site when not being used at sessions.

Activity risk assessments are completed for all activities involving the use of tools.

Tool use risk benefit assessments are available to read, and all staff will follow the procedures outlines in them.

5 – Emergency Procedure

At Forest School the schools Emergency Procedure will be followed. In addition to this all staff, volunteers and participants will be briefed on what to do in the case of an emergency. A whistle will be blown as a signal to stop what you are doing, gather with a member of staff, be silent and wait for instructions. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure the rest of the group are safe from danger and adequately supervised. An accident form will be completed later. A RIDDOR record will be created, along with an Accident report for any death, serious injury or 7-day injury. If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by first aid on site and requires medical assistance:

- In serious cases, the Emergency Services will be contacted (see below) using the emergency phone carried by the Forest School Leader. Then the school will be notified. The school office will be responsible for contacting the injured party's emergency contact.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety.
- One member of staff from school will meet the ambulance at the school entrance and direct the crew to the incident site.
- If the injured party is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the injured party's emergency contact will be updated about the situation by the school office staff.
- In minor cases, the Forest School Leader will arrange to contact the injured party's emergency contact so that they can be collected and taken to hospital, doctor or home – as appropriate.

Emergency Contact Numbers:

- Ambulance/Fire Brigade = 999
- School Office = 01745 351892

If Requesting attendance by Emergency Services:

• Dial 999 and ask for ambulance or fire brigade. Be ready with the following information:

• School number – 01745 351892

• School post code – LL18 5LE

6- Complaints Procedure

At Forest School our standard school Complaints Policy will be followed and can be accessed via the link below:

[Policies | Ysgol Y Foryd](#)

If a parents/career/volunteer wishes to make a complaint about any occurrences concerning Forest School, they can talk to the Forest School Leader or class teacher initially.

7- Missing Child Procedure

As soon as it is discovered that the head count at any particular moment does not agree with that recorded at the start of that session, the Forest School Leader will be informed, if unaware.

If an immediate recount still shows a shortfall, all activities will be suspended and “1, 2, 3, come to me” call will be used to rally all group members.

One adult will be released for a five-minute search of the immediate area, whilst another adult occupies the remaining children with a game/song or story. The main aim to prevent anxiety escalating amongst the children, “1, 2, 3, come to me” will be carried out once more.

If the five-minute search does not discover the missing child/children, the Forest School Leader will take the group back to school, retracing the paths taken earlier. One adult will stay in the area to continue looking, contact will be maintained by mobile phone.

If the group and leader cannot locate the missing child/children, and if the searching adult has not found anyone, the school office will be notified to alert any supporting staff to help in the search.

At this point, the Head teacher will be notified by the Forest School Leader of the current situation. The Head teacher may choose to alert Police and Parents and follow the appropriate policy and process.

Forest School Staff should immediately make a record of events and timings and last known position of the child/children. These will be recorded in the Forest School incident book.

8 – Behaviour Policy

Ysgol Y Foryd Policy will be followed and can be accessed via the link below:

[Policies | Ysgol Y Foryd](#)

The Forest School leader will follow the school's Behaviour Policy, however if the behaviour of an individual, or group of individuals is such that it puts their own and others safety at risk then the individual(s) may be required to return to the school building with an accompanying adult. This will be at the discretion of the Forest School leader.

9 – Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

At Forest School our standard school Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Policy will be followed and can be accessed via the link below:

[Policies | Ysgol Y Foryd](#)

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader and accompanying adults to ensure the safety of children when on a forest school session. We are committed to creating an environment in which children are safe and free from harm. It is the role of the Forest School Leader to minimize the risk of abuse taking place:

- By educating children how to stay safe and speak out.
- Taking appropriate action should any allegations arise and following the school's child protection and safeguarding policy.

Adults including parent helpers working within forest school sessions need to appreciate that when children feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they may disclose information which they might otherwise keep to themselves. Any volunteer or member of staff who finds that a child is telling them something which concerns them should:

- Listen to the child, allowing them to lead the discussion.
- Keep calm and offer some reassurance and accept what the child says without challenge.
- Make NO promises. You cannot 'keep a secret'. You should make it understood that there are limits to confidentiality at the start of the disclosure.
- Inform the designated member of staff in School.
- Keep an accurate, written record of the conversation including; the date, time, the location and what was said by the child and yourself. Keep it secure and hand the record to the designated member for child protection as soon as possible.

10– Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy

At Forest School our standard school Data Protection Policy and Confidentiality Policy will be followed and can be accessed via the link below:

[Policies | Ysgol Y Foryd](#)

All confidential paperwork will be stored in the office area. Any paperwork relevant to a child will be shared with the child's class teacher. Any Pastoral or Safeguarding matters will also be reported to the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher.

All computer files containing information will be stored securely on the school network. Any discussion within Forest School about a child's learning is to be kept confidential at all times. It is not the place of a staff member or volunteer to talk about children in their care outside of school premises unless in the capacity of a professional nature. If a member of staff is found talking about and naming children, it could lead to a disciplinary matter. In the event of a volunteer doing so, they would be asked to relinquish their role within our school.

11– Environmental impact assessment and monitoring policy

The Forest School Leader and School caretaker will monitor and review the impact Forest School is having on the Forest environment. The Ecological Impact form will be updated by the Forest School Leader if a new activity is added as and when the activity starts. It will be reviewed quarterly.

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT				
Impact	What part of the site will be affected?	What are you already doing to minimise impact?	What else could you do?	How will this inform your Site Management Plan?
Trampling	High use of ground area.	Use a designated area.	Rotate site. Create path ways.	
Fire	Ground	Contained to one area.	Fire bowl. Use natural resources.	
Noise pollution	Surrounding area.	1, 2, 3 come back to me, small area.		
Toilets	None	Go before leaving. Limit time outside.	Ask to use toilets at on site school.	
Litter	Working area	Take any litter with us.	Have allocated bins.	
Resources	Surrounding area	We allocate enough resource for each child.	Keep to a budget.	

12– First Aid Procedure

A number of staff within the school (including the current Forest School Leader) are qualified first aiders and will administer the care needed. · First aid kit will be taken to all sessions and will be checked regularly.

First Aid Equipment

- Sterile Wipes x 5
- Plasters of various sizes
- Conforming Bandages x 3
- Non adhesive square bandages x 3
- Scissors
- Surgical tape
- Hand gel
- Disposable gloves x 5
- Safety pins x 5
- Eye dressings x 2
- Water bottle (labelled when last filled)
- Hypo allergenic sun cream
- Bite and sting relief spray
- Children's specific medication and details
- Emergency First Aid Manual

Whilst dealing with a first aid incident, the leader will ensure the safety of all other children within the group by advising other adults present of the situation and ask them to monitor the other children, if alone children will be call to the area that the leader is in and if necessary all children will be taken indoors.

Seek emergency help if needed.

There will be a first aid kit taken into the woodland area and extra first aid equipment is located within the school.

Contact the parents and complete the accident report forms.

Ensure all staff are aware of medical conditions of the children and inhalers, epi pens etc. are taken.

13– Food Safety Policy

Food safety and Hygiene Procedures

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by an adult to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready they will participate in simple cooking on the fire activities which include; toasting marshmallows/ waffles and making s'mores. There is always a staff member present with food hygiene training, when food is being handled and prepared.

Food Preparation, transport and storage

Hands will be washed thoroughly and any cuts/grazes covered in the correct manner (blue plaster or ideally gloves) before handling and preparing food.

Any food needing preparation will be prepared in the school kitchen e.g. bread dough

Food will be stored in clean containers and transported in a cool bag to and from the site, with any clean utensils and cooking pans required. The box will remain closed in between use with food covered in bags or boxes to avoid attracting flies and other insects.

Raw meats will be stored separately to any other foods.

All 'use by' dates will be checked on foods before eating.

Water for cooking will be provided in cleaned sealed storage container.

Handling, cooking and eating Food

A fresh, clean, bucket of warm soapy water will be available for children to wash their hands before handling food or utensils. · Children are taught how to cook food safely following the activity risk assessment and fire procedure. All food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is fully cooked before eating.

Children will be asked to sit still around the fire circle or to move to a designated eating area from the fire to keep numbers to a minimum near the fire circle.

Clearing away and cleaning up

ALL food not eaten or cooked will be placed in black bin bags and disposed of in the school bin at the end of the session by one of the adults.

The area is checked to ensure there is no food traces to avoid vermin being attracted to the area.

ALL utensils and pans will be washed at the station in hot soapy water and stored away correctly.

14– Health and Safety Policy

At Forest School our standard school Health and Safety Policy will be followed and can be accessed via the link below:

[Policies | Ysgol Y Foryd](#)

Forest School sessions by their nature encourage children to develop their own risk management skills and will support them to become responsible for themselves and others around them. Children will be reminded of rules and safe play if they are considered too dangerous. All staff and helper will be DBS checked. Risk assessments will be carried out before each visit and for the use of all tools and equipment. Risk assessments will be printed, read and signed by each adult attending the session. The Forest School Leader will assess weather conditions regularly and will evacuate the area if they become too extreme. All children and adults will wear appropriate clothing depending upon the weather conditions. An open fire risk assessment will be carried out before a fire is allowed and protection procedures followed. A Forest School Leader will be present at all times and children will be reminded of safe practice. The school has a Health and Safety Policy, Safeguarding Children Policy etc. to enhance aspects of health and safety.

15 – Inclusion/Equal Opportunities Policy

At Forest School our standard school Inclusion Policy will be followed and can be accessed via the link below

[Policies | Ysgol Y Foryd](#)

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place, reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc. Ysgol Y Foryd Infant School has an additional Educational Needs and Inclusion Policy and an Equal Opportunities Policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.

16– Risk Assessment and Management Policy

A full annual Risk Assessment of Ysgol Y Foryd Forest School site and other forest site used will be undertaken every Autumn and updated every term or following high winds, floods, any occurrence that may have resulted in changes to the environment . This will be undertaken by the Forest School Leader and will comply with Health and Safety Executive's Five Steps to Risk Assessment programme and review the four layers of the forest. All trees will be visually checked on this occasion. Any trees identified as suffering damage will be removed / made safe prior to use of the area. In addition, a daily risk assessment will take place prior to Forest School sessions, with a visual check of the area and removal of any rubbish and areas clearly identified or sectioned off from use if necessary. Risk assessments will be with the Forest School Leader and all supporting adults constantly reviewing potential danger with a view to support and enable such activities to take place to foster learning yet working with the children to ensure safety at all times for themselves and others using the site.

Risk Assessments will include

The site of the Forest School.

Equipment and Activities.

Open Fire.

Individual Risk Assessments for tools (bill hook, bow saw, mallets, knives), where applicable.

17 – Weather Policy

Exposure to the elements is part of the magic of nature and therefor an integral part of the Forest School experience. Therefore, Forest School sessions will go ahead in all weather conditions with only a few exceptions.

Strong winds that make our forest area hazardous due to falling debris.

Very wet freezing conditions where hypothermia could be a real possibility.

Thunder and lightning.

If snow is falling heavily, freeing and causing ground to become slippy or icy.

If it is too hot and the children are at risk of sun exhaustion.