



Thomas A' Becket Infant School

Outdoor Learning:

Forest School Handbook

This handbook is made available to all supporting adults who have a role at Thomas A' Becket Infant School Forest School sessions.

What we say:

The ethos of Forest School at Thomas A' Becket Infant School is based on a fundamental respect for children's individual capacities to investigate, test and maintain curiosity in the natural world around them. We embrace children's right to play and right to access the outdoors. We provide our children with opportunities to appreciate the vibrant reality of the natural world. By navigating the risks the natural world produces, our Forest School aims to allow children to develop independence, resilience, confidence and motivation. A carefully considered approach to each child's development is promoted through their engagement with our Forest School programme of learning.

What children say:

- "Nature helps me to relax"
- "I can solve problems"
- "I keep trying"
- "My friends can help me if I am stuck"
- "I try out new things"
- "I use my words to talk about feelings"
- "I can work out what is safe"
- "I have learnt new words for some things outside"
- "I can always ask for help"



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**Section 1:
Emergency Procedures**

Emergency Procedures, an overview:

Emergency procedures will be known by all school staff working in Forest School. Volunteer adults will be briefed on emergency procedures by the Forest School Leader.

The following items will always be on the Forest School site:

- A fully stocked first aid kit – **identifiable as a navy-blue rucksack with school logo.**
- A charged walkie-talkie – **set to channel 5 (whole school contact channel).**
- A fire exit site map – **on the wall in the right of the Forest School shed.**
- Emergency contact details for all participants – available via school office.
- Fire bucket and fire blanket – **next to the fire circle chiminea.**
- Someone designated, most commonly the Class Teaching Assistant, to take full responsibility if the Forest School Leader is injured.

In the event of an emergency the Forest School leader will call the emergency services to inform them of the incident and the location on **999**. The Forest School Leader will then inform the Senior Leadership Team and the office via walkie-talkie.

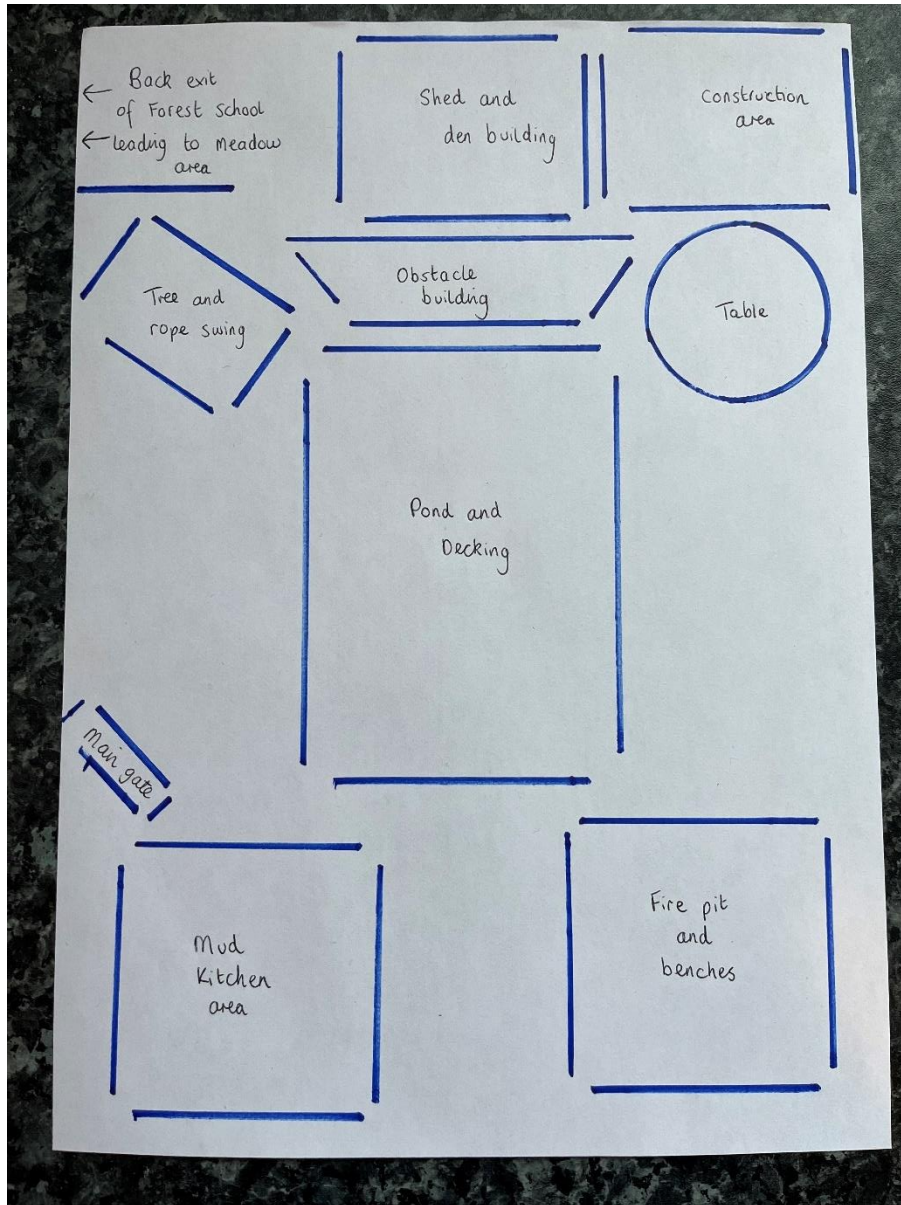
All minor incidents (**non-emergency**) should be dealt with by assisting school staff members – Class Teaching Assistant or supporting member of SEN team. In their absence the Forest School Leader will assume responsibility for first aid.

1.1 What if there is a fire at Thomas A' Becket Infant School?

- The fire alarm will sound from the building, this is a clear high-pitched siren which can be heard from Forest School.
- The Forest School Leader or class Teaching Assistant will line children and any other adults up at the gate which reads 'Forest School'.
- The Forest School Leader to check the toilets.
- Should a fire alarm sound when we have a fire lit in Forest School, children and adults will leave the fire circle area using the 'Green Dragon' fire safety rules (described later in detail in this handbook) and make their way to line up by the gate which reads 'Forest School'.
- The Class Teaching Assistant will then lead the class round to the fire meeting point on the front playground. The exact meeting point will depend on the class who are in session at Forest School. The Class Teaching Assistant will guide the line to the correct spot.
- If small groups are undertaking an activity around the school, the adult with the group to stop the children immediately and to walk calmly to the front playground area via the quickest known outdoor route – do not enter the school. Class Teaching Assistant will inform the Fire Warden if there are any small groups who have been working around the school.
- Class Teaching Assistant to complete register children once in playground and follow whole school fire procedures from then on. The Forest School Leader will be undertaking the following:
 - Once the children have left put out the fire in the chiminea.
 - Check the area for children.
 - Make way to the meeting point. Should the Forest School Leader arrive prior to the class register being taken, the Forest School Leader can take the class register.

1.2 Forest School Site Map

Below is a Forest School site map. **NOTE: the main gate at the bottom left of the map is our primary entrance and exit. In the event of an emergency, it is possible to exit via the back of Forest School as indicated in the top left corner.**



1.3 What are the emergency telephone numbers I need to know?

Emergency services: 999

School phone number: 01903 235386

NOTE: A school walkie-talkie when set to channel 5 will contact every switched-on and in-range walkie-talkie in the school.

1.4 Can I view the Risk Assessments for Forest School?

Yes. A copy the generic site risk assessment and relevant lesson planning tool and activity risk assessments will be on site and available to all staff – these can be found on the wall in the right of the shed.

1.5 What about instances of poor weather?

- In instances of poor weather, consideration should always be given to the vulnerability of the class (such as age range of class) and whether sufficient shelter can be provided, or warming activities possible to maintain the morale of the class.
- High winds: if the forecasted wind is 30mph or greater than children can remain outdoors but away from the Forest School area; areas away from dense tree population. Other outdoor areas of the school are available, such as the field. Forest School Leader to observe and comply with all West Sussex County Council guidance on weather warnings for wind.
- Thunderstorms: it is not appropriate to be out in Forest School during a thunderstorm. If a storm occurs unexpectedly when on site, the Forest School Leader will judge whether it is safer to stay put with the class or move immediately to an indoor space.
- Please see the next section of this handbook for information on wind speeds.



Section 2:
Health and Safety

Health & Safety:

2.1 Who administers First Aid?

- Class Teaching Assistants can administer first aid. The Forest School Leader is also a qualified First Aider.
- The Class Teaching Assistant to provide an initial response to minor injuries. The Forest School Leader will provide an initial response to major injuries.
- In the absence of a Class Teaching Assistant (if they are providing support for another issue) the Forest School Leader will provide first aid.
- A school 'Head Bump Sticker' will be issued by the staff member providing first aid if a child has bumped their head.
- If adults working in Forest School are unsure of severity of an injury (e.g. bumped head) the child's parent must be contacted at the earliest opportunity. The school office can support with this, contactable via the walkie-talkie. If in doubt, emergency services should be contacted – telephone 999.
- Injured staff and volunteers will be treated by the Forest School Leader.
- The Forest School Leader will have a current first aid certificate and have a full first aid kit at Forest School – identifiable as a navy-blue rucksack with school logo.
- The first aid kit, fire blanket, bucket of water and fire gloves will be placed in a visible position.
- All first aid incidents will be recorded in the class accident book.
- The Forest School Leader will regularly check their first aid kits and replace any used items.
- The Class Teaching Assistant or the Forest School Leader will fill out the class accident reporting book carefully and fully, providing as much detail as possible.

2.2 How will the weather potentially impact our Forest School sessions?

Forest School sessions will normally take place in all weathers. Forest School will only be adapted or cancelled in the following circumstances:

- Extremely wet or cold conditions that could result in a child suffering from hypothermia.
- Gale force winds which make the Forest School site hazardous. The trigger for this consideration will be when winds reach Beaufort Scale 6/7 (see chart to follow). This involves an element of personal

judgement and the Forest School Leader's decision is final. If weather conditions are deemed potentially hazardous by the Forest School Leader, then the session will move indoors.

2.3 Beaufort wind scale

Beaufort Scale	Description and Wind Speed (Knots)	Land Signs	Guideline
			<i>Each situation is unique, and decisions must be made accordingly to ensure the safety of all</i>
0 - 3	Calm to gentle breeze <i>Less than 1 – up to 10 knots / 0 – 19kph</i>	At BS3 Light flags extended. Leaves in constant gentle motion.	Ideal conditions
4	Moderate breeze <i>11 – 16 knots / 20 – 28kph</i>	Most flags extended fully; small branches move. Dust and loose paper may be raised	Generally fine for Forest School Session to continue
5	Fresh breeze <i>17 – 21 knots / 29 – 38kph</i>	Small trees in a leaf sway. Tops of all trees in noticeable motion. Crested wavelets form on inland waters.	OK to continue provided site has been thoroughly checked for lodged branches and dead trees / branches but be prepared to move off site if wind increases.
6	Strong breeze <i>22-27 knots / 38 – 49kph</i>	Large branches in motion. Whistling heard in wires. Umbrellas used with difficulty.	Move session indoors.
7	Near gale <i>28 – 33 knots / 50 – 61kph</i>	Whole trees in motion. Inconvenience felt when walking against wind.	Move session indoors.

2.4 How do you ensure Health and Safety through session preparation?

- All activities must be risk assessed in advance by the Forest School Leader.
- The Forest School site must be risk assessed daily and through on-going observation throughout the session.
- Any fire which is lit must be lit within the fire circle area and inside the Forest School chiminea.

2.5 What are the toileting arrangements for children and adults?

- During the session children will use the toilets in the 'nurture huts'.
- Reminders about how to use these toilets appropriately and safely to be given at the start of each session; children and adults at Forest School must remember that these toilets are shared facilities with children accessing the nurture room facilities and After School Club.
- During the session adults can use the toilet next to the finance office and Dragonflies classroom.
- Forest School Leader to ensure clean water and soap is available for hand washing in both locations.

2.6 How does safeguarding and child protection happen at Forest School?

- Forest School sessions adhere to the Thomas A' Becket Infant School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- The policy is publicly available on the school web site:
https://www.tabinfant.org.uk/files/ugd/ef338b_c562f9c9c63e4178875482443a68596c.pdf . A printed copy is available upon request.
- Any safeguarding issues must be reported to a school safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity:
 - Designated Safeguarding Lead: Teresa Bourne/Amanda Dingwall
 - Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead(s): Xanthe Wrigley and Collette Wade

Fire Procedures

2.7 Forest School Fire in the chiminea

Forest School often involves a fire in our Forest School chiminea. Children learn fire safety and fire management skills in our calm and safe environment.

- By demonstrating responsible fire practice, we discuss the fact that fire lighting can only be done with the Forest School Leader's permission and with safety measures in place.
- Children and adults are supported in their understanding of safety around the fire using commonly understood and practiced phrases such as 'Green, Yellow and Red Dragon'. In this way all participants can learn to take responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others. **NOTE: See explanation of 'Green, Yellow and Red Dragon' fire protocol below.**
- Only children that are supervised may light fires.
- Children must have long hair tied back when lighting fire. NOTE: we must be vigilant of long strands of hair, often next to a fringe, which are not tied back in a bobble. No hats with long sides to be worn when fire lighting.
- Children must not poke the fire or throw things into the Forest School chiminea.

- Only appropriate material is used as fuel – extra dried kindling and logs to decrease the smoke impact for our neighbours.
- No children may add anything (wood, fire lighter) to the fire. **This job is expressly only for adults working at Forest School.**
- When adding anything to the fire, **all adults must wear the fire gloves.**
- Seating around the fire will be approximately 1.5m from the fire and must be stable.
- The first aid kit, bucket of water, fire blanket and fireproof gloves will be placed in a visible position before the fire is lit and all staff will be informed of their location.
- Children and adults must not run and should walk around the outside of the seats and not through the fire circle. Red, green and orange dragon protocol applies.

Red, green and orange dragon fire protocol

At Forest School we want all our children and adults to be ‘Green Dragons’ instead of ‘Red Dragons’ when we are around the fire circle.

We should always be a ‘Green Dragon’ at Forest School as this shows we can walk sensibly around the outside of the campfire, whilst ‘Red Dragons’ can be dangerous. ‘Red Dragons’ may run inside the fire circle and knock someone over or trip when there’s a fire. We always want to promote respect for fire and for ourselves to keep everyone safe.

On some occasions an adult may be an ‘Orange Dragon’ which means that the adult is permitted to enter the fire circle for a specific purpose – for example, adding more wood to the fire. **There is never a reason for a child to be an ‘Orange Dragon’.**

2.8 How do we manage behaviour at Forest School?

“Good behaviour in schools is central to a good education. Schools need to manage behaviour well so they can provide calm, safe and supportive environments which children and young people want to attend and where they can learn and thrive.”

(Behaviour in Schools, September 2022, DfE)

- Forest School sessions adhere to the Thomas A’ Becket Infant School Relationships (behaviour) Policy.
- The policy is publicly available on the school web site:
https://www.tabinfant.org.uk/files/ugd/ef338b_60e6f84a520846e1b92407bc4861c8a4.pdf A printed copy is available upon request.
- NOTE: The Relationships (behaviour) policy should be read alongside other policies which refer to managing behaviours, for example, Child Protection Policy, Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Recording Policy. All these policies are available on the school web site and printed copies are available upon request.

2.9 Tools and Equipment Guidelines

There are generic tool and equipment risk assessments. These cover storage, maintenance and use. Best practice is for children to be familiar with the setting and be confident in other aspects of Forest School before using tools.

- All the personal protective equipment (PPE) required to work safely with tools is provided by Forest School. This includes adult and child sized gloves for tool use.
- Children are trained to use and become confident with tools by introducing safe alternatives like peelers (as opposed to whittling knives).
- The Forest School Leader will demonstrate how to use each tool, to both children and adults. The Forest School Leader will explain potential dangers of using them and how to use them responsibly.
- Safe working distances should be always demonstrated. When using tools participants must be at least an arm plus tool length apart. The notion of a 'safety' or 'blood' bubble is encouraged.
- Work is carried out in small groups to increase learning through peer observation.
- All tools are kept safely away from children and adults when not in use.
- Tools must be stored appropriately and counted back when not in use. This is to avoid injury resulting from the loss or misuse of tools.
- Tools are checked that they are in a safe working order before the session begins.

2.10 The Pond

During each Forest School session children and adults can pond dip to explore and learn about our pond's ecosystem.

- Children and adults must be on their knees when partaking in pond dipping.
- Children and adults must only use the nets provided by the Forest School Leader.
- No objects other than nets must enter the water.

2.11 Sanitation Procedures

During each Forest School session the children and adults will pause their activities to meet for a communal snack. The Forest School Leader will ensure that access to hand washing facilities is available. Primarily, this will be in the toilets of the 'nurture huts'.

2.12 Ticks

At Forest School we are 'tick aware'.

- Ticks are small arachnids, which feed on the blood of animals including pets and people.
- Some ticks carry a bacterial infection called Lyme Disease.
- Widespread across the UK, ticks are most active from May to October, especially in warm Weather.
- They are usually found in long grass, rough vegetation and woodland.
- We ask all our children and adults to wear long sleeved tops and trouser when at Forest School. It is best to wear light coloured clothes when possible so that ticks can be more easily seen.
- Whilst not all ticks have the bacteria that causes Lyme Disease, they are still an unwelcome guest and should be carefully removed with a special tick removal tool or fine tipped tweezers, which can be

obtained from most chemists, vets or pet shops. For this reason, if a tick is identified on a child, the Forest School Leader will contact the school office who will call their parent/carer who will come to collect their child and arrange for the tick to be removed. **Note: All adults must not attempt to remove a tick from a child.**





Section 3:

Environmental and Sustainability Responsibilities

Environmental

3.1 Environmental Considerations

Forest School children and adults are asked to:

- Remove all litter, including foods – **a waste bin and a compost bin are available to use. There is no reason for any litter to be dropped onto the ground. This includes crafting materials such as wool.**
- Leave the site as it was found.
- Do not remove sticks from Forest School as the sticks promote wildlife.
- Do not collect plants, flowers and fruits which are growing unless doing so for a specific purpose.
- Adjust tasks in accordance with seasonal activity.
- If wildlife or nests are found, make others aware of their presence but don't touch them.
- Be aware of potentially damaging conditions to the Forest School site e.g. if the ground is very wet and muddy.
- All participants should exercise a consideration for noise and general disturbance to local wildlife and to our neighbours.

3.2 The Pond

- Sticks should not be thrown into the pond. This can make holes in the lining of the pond and can also cause injury to wildlife.

- When pond dipping any wildlife caught is to be transferred into a large tub (provided by the Forest School Leader) with plenty of water inside the tub to ensure the welfare of the wildlife.
- Wildlife is only to be taken out of the pond for a maximum of 1 hour before being returned to ensure the welfare of the wildlife.

3.3 Fire

- Any fire should have a clear purpose in supporting the aim of a session.
- We are burning dry kindling to reduce smoke pollution for our neighbours.



Section 4: Communication

Communication

4.1 Preparing our children

We aim to:

- Ensure that children are prepared for all weather conditions with suitable clothing and footwear. This is especially important for wet, hot or cold weather conditions.
- A kit list is shared to all parents and carers when the Forest School timetable is issued. (a small amount of spare kit is available for children to borrow as required).
- The Forest School Leader aims to ensure that all Class teachers and Class Teaching Assistants are knowledgeable around the Forest School programme of learning so that they feel empowered to answer questions from parents and carers as they arise.

4.2 Communication from the Forest School Leader

- The Forest School Leader will assess the weather forecast before every session and monitor wind speeds throughout the session. This information will always be shared and discussed with other adults at Forest School.
- The Forest School Leader will always ensure that every adult on site knows the whereabouts of the first aid kit, walkie-talkie, fire bucket, fire gloves and fire blanket.
- The Forest School Leader will always make herself available to answer and discuss any questions or concerns from children or other adults – **there is no such thing as a silly question.**



Section 5: Risk Assessment

5.1 How does the Forest School Leader write the risk assessments?

The Forest School Leader writes the Forest School risk assessments using a simple equation to underpin the assessment:

$$\text{Risk} = \text{Hazard Severity} \times \text{Likelihood of Occurrence}$$

The **hazard severity** is assessed on a scale of five:

- **5** **Very High** - multiple deaths
- **4** **High** - death to an individual
- **3** **Moderate** - injury or disease capable of keeping more than one person off work for 3 or more days
- **2** **Slight** - injury or disease capable of keeping one person off work three or more days
- **1** **Low** - minor injury to one individual

The **likelihood of occurrences** is similarly be assessed on a scale of five:

- **5** **Likely** - An injury is probably going to occur
- **4** **Common** - An injury is likely to occur more than three times in a working year (doing this activity every day)
- **3** **Occasional** - An injury is likely to occur two or three times in a working year (doing this activity every day)
- **2** **Possible** - An injury may occur once in a working year (doing this activity every day)
- **Not Likely** - An injury may occur less than once in a lifetime through this activity

By using the equations above, a risk factor can be determined ranging from 1 (no severity and unlikely to happen) to 25 (just waiting to happen, with disastrous and widespread results).

Risk factors from:

- **1 - 3** = low risk factor, improve when possible
- **4 - 9** = medium risk factor, improve as soon as possible
- **10+** = deal with the risk before you start the task, preferably before anyone else arrives on site. A risk factor of 10 or more is unacceptable - if it cannot be reduced do not carry out the task at all.

To make the equation work effectively, 'likelihood' and 'severity' must be judged independently.

Please note: Risk Assessments are reviewed regularly at least bi-annually or more frequently if legislation changes.