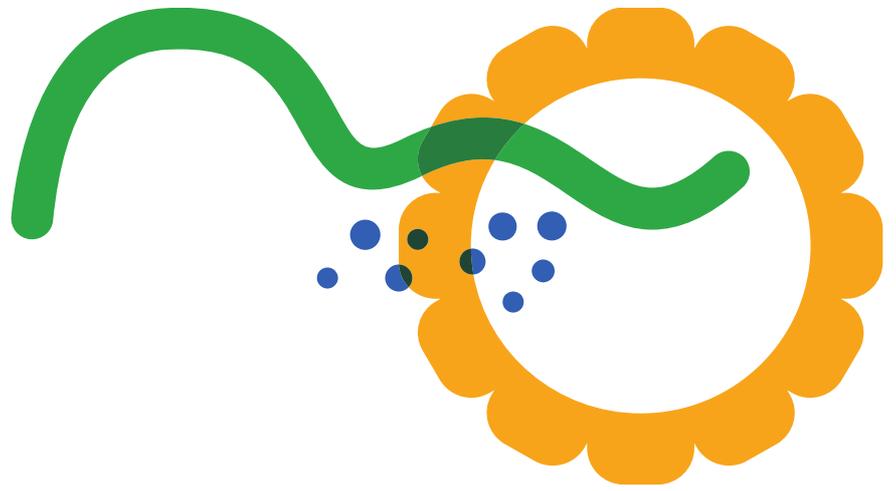
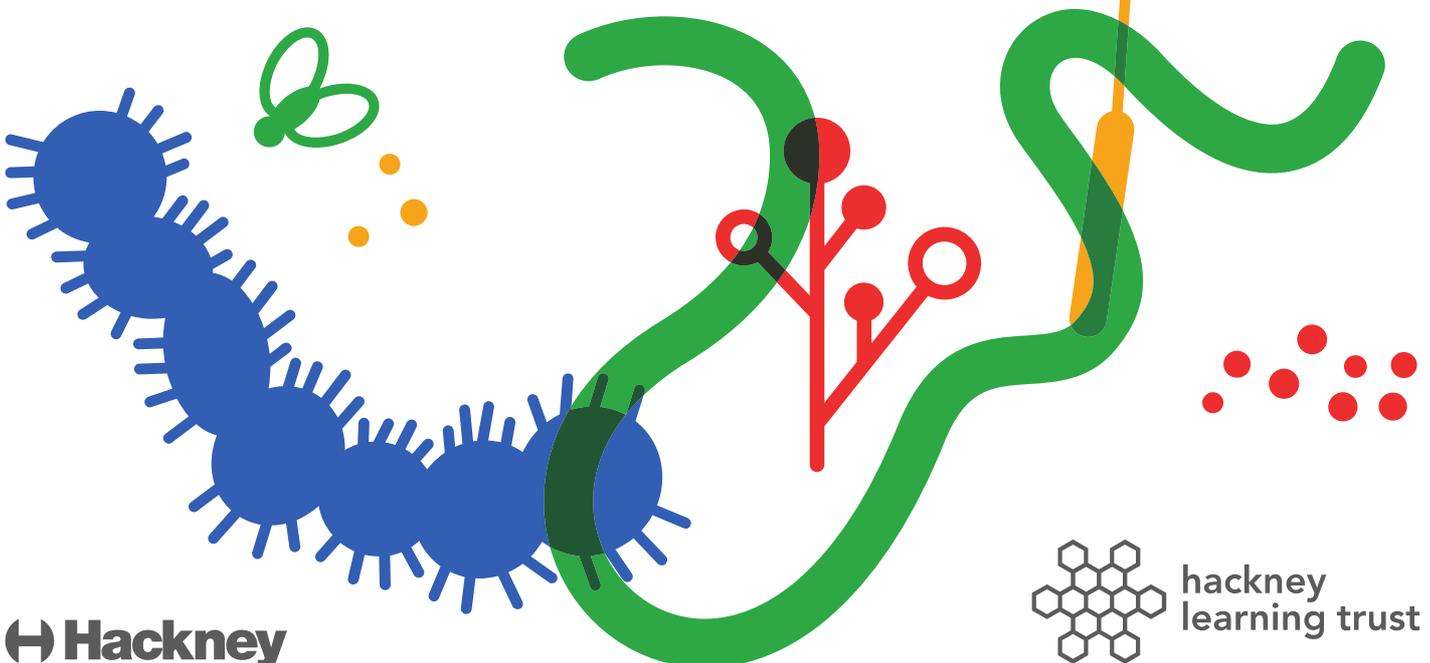


**Hackney  
Forest  
School**



# **Hackney Forest School Handbook**

**Clapton Park Children's  
Centre**



**Hackney**

 **hackney  
learning trust**

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## **The aim of Forest School Handbook**

The aim of this handbook is to provide parents and staff with information about what Forest School is, our Forest School ethos and the type of activities the children might be involved in during Forest School sessions. Also the handbook will provide policies and procedures of Clapton Park Children Centre, for practitioners to follow in order to run Forest School as well as information parents need to equip their children ready for Forest School sessions.

# History of Forest School

Forest School originated in Denmark, which has now been an integral part of Early Years curriculum since the 1980's.

The philosophy behind Forest School is based upon the desire to provide young children as well as young people and adults with an education, which encourages appreciation of the wide, natural world and developing life skills. Most importantly Forest Schools aims and objectives is to build children's self-esteem, provide experiences with significant others and ensuring small achievable tasks lead to success.

## Why outside?

Forest School is based mainly outside, as it provides a relaxed and comfortable learning environment for children. The outside world is always changing and provides a diversity of stimuli for children to explore, investigate and experience.

## Other benefits of Forest School

Forest School activities carried out are linked to the national and Early Years curriculum, allowing children to develop and support:

Outdoor activities

Understanding the world

Communication skills

Language and vocabulary

Social skills

Numeracy skills

Science

Self esteem

Motivation

Furthermore, Forest School benefits from providing an inclusive practice, enabling ALL children to have an opportunity to take part at Forest School. No matter what background a child comes from and his or her different abilities and needs, everyone is included.

# Clapton Park Children's Centre

## Forest School Ethos

Our Forest School Ethos aims to encourage and support children to explore their environment, the natural materials found outdoors as well as providing a sensory experience. We aim to provide activities that are safe and ensure the welfare of the group is paramount, taking into consideration safeguarding.

In addition, as a centre we ensure exclusion is prevented and ALL children should have a right to a positive experience at Forest School. Children will be able to use real tools and learn boundaries, both physical and social, within which they must work. Being given the freedom and responsibilities and participate in achievable tasks that reflect their interests and learning styles.

The forest school team will act as facilitators and support children to achieve independence, confidence and self-esteem. Followed by exploring, learning and persevering based on careful observation, planning and evaluation.

# Forest School Rules and Countryside Code

## Forest School Rules:

- Look after your Forest School
- Do not pick anything that is growing
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth
- No pick No lick
- Stay within the boundary
- '*123 Basecamp*' return to basecamp

## The Countryside Code:

There are five sections of The Countryside Code dedicated to helping us learn how to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside.

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

## Session Routine

This routine is to be followed each session. Prior to each session the Forest School Leader will need to complete the **safety sweep** of the site.

- Put on clothes, wellies.
- Talk about rules for walking to the site (stay behind the leader, hold hands with a partner, walk sensibly in a line)
- Before leaving the Nursery gate count the children (Sticky Elbows)
- Walk to the area discussing things to be seen on the way.
- Discuss any safety issues on the day e.g. weather (Risk Assessment)
- Walk to base camp (Sticky Elbows)
- Retrieve any logs, sit down, discuss rules and any safety issues (Using an animal puppet)
- Introduce Activity and Exploration Time
- Self-Select water and wet wipes
- 1-2-3 Basecamp
- Discuss learning and feedback
- Sticky Elbows and Walk back to Nursery
- Remove Clothing

# Forest School Activities

Forest School activities are numerous and should reflect the children's interest, their schemas and learning styles (see appendices 1 and 2). Activities may vary according to weather conditions, although many activities can be carried out throughout all seasons. On the other hand Forest School activities are not specifically developed to go off premises at all times to experience the natural environment but can also be experienced based in the nursery setting.

Here are some examples of what the children might be doing in a session:

## **Rainy weather:**

Digging channels for water, creating mini ponds, mini water dams, sliding down muddy banks, collecting rainwater in containers, transporting rainwater in containers, using funnels, digging in the mud, make dens for shelter etc.

## **Snow:**

Investigating snow, ice, freezing and melting, sliding, transporting, making ice and snow sculptures, decorating snow balls with natural materials, comparing sizes of snow balls, creating patterns in the snow, building a fire, cooking and making hot drinks, writing in the snow, using sledges and many more.

## **Dry weather:**

Collecting, classifying natural materials, observational drawings, building shelters, rolling logs, making fires, cooking, making insect houses, writing with sticks, mud sculptures, cutting and carving wood and many more

# Forest School Resources/Equipment

The equipment used by Forest School is various and not all equipment goes to Forest School in one session.

## Equipment:

Water bottle

Tarp

Protective gloves

Bow saws

Hacksaw

Pruning saw

Billhook

Loppers

Penknives

Peelers

Tent pegs

Secateurs

Hand drill

Tarps

Kelly kettle

Rope/string

Fire lighting kit (matches, strikers, tinder, cotton wool, fast burn)

## Resource examples:

Boundary sticks

Sticky back card

3 piece sisal string for environmental curtain activity

Magnifying glasses

Nets

Safety bag

Digging spades

## Essential Equipment and Care

This list shows all essential items to be taken out each Forest School session. It is the responsibility of the leader to ensure these items are taken.

1. Register with emergency numbers/contact numbers.
2. Medical Forms
3. Mobile Phone
4. Newspaper
5. Matches
6. Wet wipes
7. Protective gloves
8. Sun-cream
9. First Aid kit with plasters for Adults
10. Bandages
11. Scissors
12. Water bottles with water for drinking and washing (unopened bottles).
13. Sleeping bag/Survival bag
14. Thermal wrap sheet
15. Map of Woodland Area
16. Pamphlet on hypothermia and first aid
17. Containers for inhalers
18. Carry bag for dirty/wet clothing

## Clothing Requirements

This list shows all essential clothing requirements to be taken out on a Forest School Session for everyone including adults. This will differ depending on the season.

1. Woolly hat / Sun hat
2. Gloves
3. Jacket/Waterproof coat
4. Fleece/Sweatshirt
5. Long Trousers/Long Sleeve Tops
6. Spare socks
7. Stout shoes/Wellies/Bitts
8. An emergency change of clothes in a backpack and a carrier bag for wet/dirty clothing.

## Travel and Ratio Policy

When taking children to Forest Schools staff must ensure their safety at all times. It is the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team to give permission for the outing to take place, ensuring they have first checked the arrangements and the formal risk assessment and these have been signed off. Staff also need to complete an outings form to be signed by SLT and kept in the short outings folder.

### Guidelines for Forest Schools Outings:

- Children must be carefully supervised at all times.
- All volunteers who do not have a DBS must remain with permanent staff at all times.
- First Aid kit must be taken.
- A mobile phone must be taken and the number must be left at the Centre in case of emergencies.
- A register must be taken to Forest Schools this must include all emergency contact details.
- A Forest School leader must always accompany the visit.
- All children must have parental consent to participate in Forest School.

### Staff and child ratios:

#### Forest School Ratio's

- 1 adult to 3 children aged 2-3
- 1 adult to 4 children aged 3-5

If a child has special educational needs a 1:1 ratio should be considered for Forest Schools.

## Risk Assessment of Site

(See attached Risk Assessment)

### **Forest School things to remember:**

- Full risk assessments to be completed by Forest School leader termly to take into consideration any season changes that may cause issue.
- Forest School session will not take place when there are high winds/thunder and lightning or extremes in temperatures
- First aid certificates to be renewed every 3 years
- All adults involved must have looked and read through handbook and signed to say they have done so.

# Risk Assessment of Site

## Risk assessment on tools

### General rules for tool use:

- All tools must have an individual risk assessment
- Ensure safe storage at school with Forest School leader access and Responsibility
- Ensure safe storage and responsibility by Forest School leader at Forest School site
- Never walk around with tools
- Always make sure they are clean and sharp after they are used and before they are put away ready for next session
- When using tools have a designated tool area where you and the children sit when using tools.
- All knives to be stored in a locked cupboard in a locked box at setting
- Access to knives only by Forest School leader
- When using tools you must have a record of what tools you have in the toolkit to check in and out against
- When transporting tools they must have a risk assessment in the locked box
- Always remember to carry a knife is a criminal offence without a good Reason
- Forest School leader only to use secateurs, always lock immediately after use.

# Risk Assessment of Site

## Forest School considerations when deciding on Base camp

- Termly risk assessments
- Safety sweep before each session
- Is area sheltered from wind/and or rain
- Is there standing dead wood? How will you manage it?
- Is there a flat area for the children to have a seating area
- Are there stinging nettles/brambles?
- Can you clear pathways so children can move without being stung?
- Are there climbing trees? How will you manage this?
- Are there bees/wasps? (This must be checked at each safety sweep by observing the area)
- Will children hear you above the noise level?
- Do you have to pass through any livestock? How will you manage this (not recommended to pass through cows, movement can attract them to children)
- Are there trip hazards? How will you manage them?
- Can emergency vehicles access the area? Does everyone know the grid reference or postcode?

# Risk Assessment of Site

## Forest School sustainability considerations

- Ensure at all times we are taking care of our forest school site
- Ensure we are using different tracks into the base camp area.
- Monitor the impact of children and adults on the FS site.
- Leave the site as we have found it.
- When coppicing trees ensure we are considering the impact.

# Emergency Procedures

## **Missing child:**

- FS Lead/practitioner to call group to base camp or designated safe area
- FS Lead/leading practitioner to take register to clarify who is lost
- Other staff to take the group for story/singing whilst other adults look for child
- Search for 5 minutes and then contact CPCC immediately (search continues)
- phone emergency services and School to contact parents
- Take advice from police

## **First aid incident (minor)**

- Take advice from FS leader

## **First aid incident (MAJOR)**

- Assistant 1 Call children back to base camp, supervise and keep them calm
- Be ready to follow evacuation procedures if instructed to by Forest School leader
- upon instruction from FS leader call emergency services on mobile held by FS leader
- Call school office to inform them of emergency, school to contact parents
- Call school office if FS leader requires any further first aid assistance or further advice

## **Evacuation**

- Return to base camp
- Supervise assembled line of children as they leave forest school until they arrive safely back inside the Nursery Gate.
- Follow instructions from FS leader.

## Designated Roles and Responsibilities

### **Forest School leader:**

Planning of sessions, evaluations, check the weather conditions before any sessions, risk assessments of site, tools and equipment, environmental impact assessments, woodland surveys, safety sweeps, record of safety sweep and dealing with any issues that may arise from the safety sweep, maintenance of all stock and equipment, inducting any new adults that maybe supporting the sessions, ensuring all adults have read and understand the health and safety handbook, all first aid qualifications kept up to date, all medical info on children up to date and in H&S handbook at all times.

### **Forest School assistants:**

be clear of H&S handbook, awareness of responsibilities in case of an emergency, supporting children where necessary when on site, modelling the expectations and rules, supporting in the toileting, taking of photos, observing the children and making notes, preparing snacks and drinks, supporting of the tidying of the site before the children leave.

## Toileting Considerations

- All children to go to the toilet before leaving school
- Children encouraged to toilet behind bushes with support from 1 adult, verbally supporting but not putting themselves in a vulnerable position. They must tell leader they are leaving the group with child.
- Wipes in emergency ruck sack with plastic bags for any soiled wipes.
- Children can be brought back to the centre if needed for toileting with support of 1 adult who then either needs to leave the child with staff member or bring the child back no longer than five minutes to continue to support the session. If session has only two adults, adult can phone for a member of SLT to collect the child.
- Spare clothes in Emergency ruck sack

# Weather considerations

Before all sessions at Forest School, a weather check will be done weekly using the BBC News weather reports.

Most of the Forest School activities will be done in all weather conditions however if there are extreme weather conditions the group will not go off site for health and safety reasons.

In case the group is off-site and the weather conditions change unpredictably, the group will pack up as soon as possible, transport will be contacted and group will wait in a safe and sheltered place until transport arrives.

## Windy conditions:

Winds are over 60 mph the session will be stopped/cancelled.

Or the group will go to a clear area away from trees and take part in activities that explore wind resistant's etc.

Or group may also stay inside and focus on educational documentaries about wildlife/environment.

## Rain Conditions:

We tend to stay out less time in the rain depending on how long children are exposed to the rain/how wet they are. This will avoid children getting sick. Hot drink will be provided, extra blankets and a story or quiz.

## Sunny Conditions:

Children will ensure that they have sun protection on. Parents/Carers must provide their own. If those children have none then the centre will provide Nivea sun cream for kids. FS Lead will ensure plenty of shade is available as they explore.

# Insurance Requirements

(See Attached Form)

# Forest School Safety Sweep

Name of Forest School leader:	Date:	Time:	Weather:
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Checklist	Yes/no	Comments:	Yes/no	Comments:
Fallen branches				
Low branches				
Protruding thorns				
Brambles/nettles				
Slippery areas				
Broken glass/needles				
Vandalism/ intruders				
Weather effects				
Standing water				
Boundary line/fence				
Base camp				
Tool area roped off				
Emergency ruck sack				
Equipment ready				
Spare clothes				
Dead wood				
Dog faeces/human faeces				

## Medical and Emergency Contact

Forest Schools Emergency Contact and Medical Information

<b>Childs Full Name:</b>		
<b>Date of Birth:</b>		
<b>Contact name and relationship to Child:</b>		
<b>Phone Numbers:</b>		
<b>Doctors:</b>		
<b>Illness</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Medication Required</b>
Asthma/Bronchitis		
Sight/Hearing		
Heart Condition		
Diabetes		
Epilepsy		
Allergies e.g. nuts, pollen, materials		
Bee Reaction		
Date of last Tetanus		

## HFS Policies & Guidelines

All policies and guidelines are kept in the CPCC office in the Blue Policy File. These policies and guidelines apply to our Forest School sessions.

Policies and Legislation to be considered:

- Health and Safety at Work
- Children's Act 1989
- Liability Insurance
- Behavior Policy
- Sun Cream Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Normal Laws
  - Disability Discrimination Act
  - Race Relations Act
  - Sex Discrimination Act
  - 'DBS' Checks
  - EYFS Statutory Framework