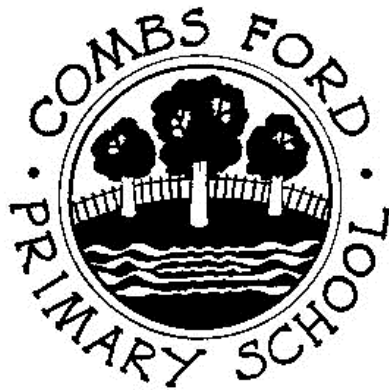


Combs Ford Primary School

Forest School Handbook



Successful Learners ~ Confident Individuals ~ Responsible Citizens

Declaration

This *Handbook* is for all adults who support regularly Combs Ford Primary School Forest School sessions and must be read as part of their induction process. A copy is always available in the woodland for reference. This *Handbook* uses documentation from Suffolk Wildlife Trust as recognised experts in Forest School training and delivery along with other Forest School providers, all of whom are listed in the *References*.

Codes of Practice, Risk Assessments, Risk-Benefit Assessments and Policies and are reviewed in line with the Children Endeavour Trust's procedures.

Updated By:	Kathryn Day (Headteacher and Forest School Leader)
Updated On:	12 th October 2024

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Our School Vision

At Combs Ford Primary School we aim for all our children to become:

- **Successful learners** who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve.
- **Confident individuals** who are able to lead safe, healthy and fulfilling lives.
- **Responsible citizens** who make a positive contribution to society.

To achieve this, our curriculum is built around six big ideas that shape our world and our culture:

- Planet Earth and the Universe;
- Civilisation;
- Human Creativity;
- Innovation and Exploration;
- Identity and Diversity;
- Personal Growth.

We also believe that, to achieve our aims, our children need to develop and strengthen seven learning behaviours (our Rainbow Values and Rules):

- **Respect:** I speak and act kindly towards others.
- **Compassion:** I understand how others feel.
- **Self-Awareness:** I understand how I feel and how I make others feel.
- **Self-Belief:** I believe that I can be the best I can be.
- **Critical Thinking:** I solve problems and make good choices.
- **Teamwork:** I work well with other people.
- **Resilience:** I don't give up when things get difficult.

Respect	I speak and act kindly towards others.
Compassion	I understand how others feel.
Self-Awareness	I understand how I feel and how I make others feel.
Self-Belief	I believe that I can be the best I can be.
Critical Thinking	I solve problems and make good choices.
Teamwork	I work well with other people.
Resilience	I don't give up when things get difficult.

How Does Forest School Support Our School Vision?

Forest School is an experiential educational approach which is one branch of the outdoor education family tree. We believe that Forest School supports our curriculum aim, contributes to children's understanding of our six big ideas that shape our world and our culture, and develops and strengthens our seven learning behaviours through its six core principles:

1. **Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.** This helps our children to learn new skills and overcome challenges, develop self-regulation, have time to work through real-world problems, and apply learned experiences, skills and solutions to new situations and environments.
2. **Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.** Our Forest School takes place in our pocket woodland on our school site. Children often find this space calming and enjoy how it changes subtly with every visit, with the weather, and with the seasons. Our children create a connection with the natural environment and learn about local flora and fauna. They monitor their ecological impact and manage the school's outdoor environment sustainably.
3. **Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.** Our children's physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional and spiritual needs are nurtured and their Forest School experiences are linked to home and school.
4. **Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.** We believe that risk is key to children's development. We recognise that risk may be physical, social and emotional and that overcoming challenges helps to build resilience and confidence. We are careful to balance the risk and benefit for each child and each activity.
5. **Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.** Our Forest School Leaders are trained to lead potentially risky activities (for example: fire and campfire cooking; den building; use of tools; use of ropes) and to be reflective of their own practices and responsive to the needs of our children.
6. **Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.** Forest School is a child-centred process which is responsive to the needs and interests of our children. It is about inspiring the acceptance of knowledge, at the right

moment, so it is in context for our children and builds self-belief, self-guided learning and self-regulation. Play and choice are essential – play is recognised as vital to children’s learning and development. Reflection is a feature of each session to ensure that children and adults can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.



The Benefits of Forest School

Research has shown that children benefit from regular Forest School sessions in many ways. We believe that Forest School supports our children in achieving our curriculum aims, long term outcomes, and focuses for learning, by:

Successful Learners

- Building positive, **respectful** and **compassionate** relationships with each other and adults.
- Developing **team-working** skills by working with others towards a shared goal.
- Improving **critical thinking** and **problem-solving** skills through teamwork and by exploring children's own interests.
- Gaining a sense of achievement through using tools safely, developing practical skills, and play.
- Improving academic attainment by developing language, communication and social skills, motivation and concentration.

Confident Individuals

- Improving strength, fitness, spatial awareness (proprioception), balance (vestibular), dexterity and interoception (sensing internal signals from your body).
- Improving mental wellbeing.
- Developing **self-awareness**, **self-belief** and **resilience** through managed risk-taking, persistence and reflection.

Responsible Citizens

- Building a connection with nature.
- Understanding the importance of protecting the natural world.
- Cultivating the behaviours that are necessary for us all to work together effectively as a community.



What Happens at Forest School?

Forest School sessions are defined by the group, the woodland and the weather.

The boundary of the woodland is agreed by the children and the adults and reinforced through playing games. The Fire Circle is the heart of the Forest School and each session begins with everyone gathering around it to reflect on the previous session (what children did and what they particularly enjoyed), any changes that can be seen in the woodland, and what is planned – or what children would like to do – in this session.

The Fire Circle is a focal and socialising point where everyone can see and be seen. A fire may be lit, but this will be dependent on the group, the weather and the activities planned.

In every session there will be a choice of activities for children to take part in, but they can also follow their own interests and explore and play within the woodland boundaries on their own or with other children. A list of activities that children may be offered are listed below – these vary depending on the age of the children and on risk-benefit assessment by the Forest School leaders. There are always plenty of games for children to take part in.

At the end of every session, children and adults work together to tidy away any tools and materials they have used and to return the woodland to how they found it. Everyone then gathers around the Fire Circle and discusses what they've enjoyed doing and what they might like to do in their next visit to the woods.

Adults evaluate every session and plan the next visit to the woods based on the children's responses and the adults' observations. Risk assessments are adapted based on the needs of the group.



Forest School Session Routines

Equipment

<input type="checkbox"/> Forest School Emergency Kit Bag	<input type="checkbox"/> Handwashing Kit
<input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Kit	<input type="checkbox"/> Tools
<input type="checkbox"/> First Aid Handbook	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire-Lighting Kit
<input type="checkbox"/> Accident Recording Forms	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Blanket
<input type="checkbox"/> Fresh Water	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Gloves
<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Fire Bucket (Full)
<input type="checkbox"/> Walkie-Talkies	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Protective Equipment
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> Craft Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> Forest School Handbook	<input type="checkbox"/> Tarpaulins
<input type="checkbox"/> Codes of Practice	<input type="checkbox"/> Hammocks
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk-Benefit Assessments	<input type="checkbox"/> Woodland Identification Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Risk Assessments	<input type="checkbox"/> Forest School Activities Handbook

Setting Up

1. Carry out the *Daily Site Safety Sweep* and make any hazards safe.
2. Check the *Forest School Emergency Kit Bag* and *First Aid Kit* and restock if needed.
3. Collect all equipment.
4. Meet and brief any volunteers.
5. Check that walkie-talkies are charged.

Before Going to the Woodland

1. Introduce any new children or adults.
2. Make the group aware of hazards from the *Daily Site Safety Sweep*.
3. Check that they are all wearing suitable clothing and footwear.

In the Woodland

1. Form an opening circle around the fire circle.
2. Remind children of the woodland boundaries.
3. Describe the day's activities.

During the Session

1. Visually check all equipment before use.
2. Check on pastoral needs of group.
3. Conduct a head count as needed.
4. Ensure appropriate personal protective clothing is worn.

Before Leaving the Woodland

1. Count all tools back into their bag or box.
2. Collect all the equipment together.
3. Take down any structures.
4. Check for and collect any litter.
5. Form a closing circle around the fire circle.
6. Evaluate the session with the children and adults using the 'Talking Stick' or by dousing the fire.
7. Extinguish the fire properly and "leave no trace".

Back in School

8. Complete the appropriate evaluation forms.
9. Thoroughly check and clean all the equipment.
10. Restock the *Forest School Emergency Kit Bag* and *First Aid Kit*.

Forest School Activities

Below are examples of activities that children may be offered during Forest School. They will vary depending on the age of the children and on risk-benefit assessment by the Forest School leaders.

Learning About the Woodland Environment

- Identifying trees and plants (flora).
- Identifying animals (fauna).
- Making wildlife homes (for example, Stag Beetle Stacks, Invertebrate Hotels, Bird Boxes, Bat Boxes).

Risk Assessments for activities in the Woodland Environment are in the *Health and Safety Code of Practice for Forest School*, and the *Risk-Benefit Assessments for Biotic Detectives* and *Using Natural Materials*.

Using Hand Tools

Children will be taught how to use tools, including: checking, cleaning, maintaining and storage; how to work safely including carrying, personal protective equipment, body position, techniques, positioning of tools when not in use.

Tools include:

- Cutting Tools: Secateurs; Loppers
- Whittling Tools: Peelers; Knives
- Saws: Bow; Laplander
- Drills: Palm; Upright; Bit and Brace
- Splitters: Froes; Knives

Children will not be using tools until the Forest School Leader feels the children are ready. All tools are initially modelled by the Forest School Leader to children and adults, and all adults must receive basic training on the safe use of tools before being allowed to use them with children. Risk Assessments for Tool Use are in the *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Tool Use* and the *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Tool Use* in the appendices. These include supervision ratios and any personal protective equipment (PPE) required for the use of the tools listed above.

Ropes and Knots

Children will be taught how to check, clean, maintain and store ropes. They will learn how to tie knots for specific purposes, including:

- Overhand Knots (“Pineapple”)
- Timber Hitch
- Round Turns
- Half Hitches
- Lark’s Foot
- Prusik Loop
- Clove Hitch

- Square Lashing
- Alpine Butterfly
- Tensioning Loop

Risk Assessments for activities including ropes and knots are in the *Health and Safety Code of Practice for Ropes and Knots* and the *Risk-Benefit Assessment for Biotic Detectives and Using Natural Materials*.

Fires

- Fire Safety: the fire triangle, the fire safety triangle; fire risk assessment; looking after the environment (woodland types, soil types, site conditions, weather, minimising ecological impact, management of resources); looking after ourselves and each other (clothing, the fire circle, the fire safety zone (red, amber and blue dragons); how to light a fire safely using a steel).
- Types of Fire: Upside-Down Pyramid and Wigwam.
- Types of Tinder and Kindling: Natural and Synthetic.
- Making charcoal.
- Cooking over an open fire.

Fires, the use of Kelly Kettles and Campfire Cooking are an important part of Forest School sessions and we aim to ensure that all children and adults participating in sessions where fire is used do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible. Fires will only be lit when we need one, for example for cooking, light, drying clothes, discouraging insects, or community. Fires won't be lit if there has been a long period of hot and dry weather and the [Met Office's Fire Severity Index \(FSI\)](#) is at level 2 or above.

Children are taught a strict 'No Eating Rule' unless they are preparing and cooking food with an adult. To begin with, when children are ready, they will make simple food over the fire, for example toasting marshmallows to make s'mores and cooking damper bread. As their skills develop, more complex foods will be prepared and cooked, for example vegetable kebabs, quesadillas, and baked apples. Wild food is not cooked to avoid children becoming confused about what is safe and unsafe to eat.

Risk Assessments for activities involving fire are in the *Health and Safety Codes of Practice for Fire and Campfire Cooking* and the *Risk-Benefit Assessments for Fire, Kelly Kettle and Campfire Cooking*.

Crafts

- Medallions
- Matching Games
- Charcoal Pencil
- Tent Pegs
- Kazoo
- Tongs
- Book



- Picture Frame
- God's Eye
- Banner
- Dream Catcher
- Mallet

Risk Assessments for craft activities are in the *Risk-Benefit Assessment – Using Natural Materials*.

Structures

- Shelters
- Dens
- Balance Lines
- Rope Bridges
- Swings
- Obstacle Course

Risk Assessments for making structures are in the *Health and Safety Code of Practice for Den Building and Ropes and Knots* and the *Risk-Benefit Assessments for Den Building and Ropes and Knots*.

Tree Climbing

Getting to know a tree is number 1 on the National Trust's '[50 things to do before you're 11¾](#)' and climbing a tree is part of that challenge. Tree-climbing at Forest School allows children to challenge themselves in safe risk-assessed environment and supports their physical development, coordination and balance. Children will only be allowed to climb trees that have been risk-assessed by an adult and will be taught to check for any signs of damage. Adults will observe children whilst climbing and children are not to climb higher than the head height of adult.

Risk Assessments for tree climbing are in the *Risk-Benefit Assessments for Tree Climbing*.

Health and Safety

Adult Roles and Responsibilities

- The school's Forest School Leader is Kathryn Day (Headteacher) who holds a *Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders (Suffolk Wildlife Trust)*, an *Outdoor First Aid Course*, and a *Level 3 Award in Paediatric First Aid*.
- The Forest School Leader:
 - is in charge of Forest School sessions and leads the planning, delivery and evaluation of the Forest School sessions.
 - also takes primary responsibility in ensuring that rules, policies, Codes of Practice and risk assessments are followed.
 - reviews the *Risk Assessments* before every session, taking into account the children in the group.
 - is responsible for the maintenance and checking of all tools and equipment to be used at Forest School prior to their use.
 - is responsible in training the children and other adults in safe use of tools referring to the *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Tool Use*.
- Forest Schools is carried out with an adult to child ratio of at least 1:8. Additional adult support will be provided where appropriate for children with additional needs. Forest School activities have individual adult to child ratios which are explained in the *Codes of Practice*.
- Tools must only be used by children when supervised by a suitably trained staff member (training can be provided by the Forest School leader) and following the ratios and guidelines set out in the *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Tool Use*.
- Any foods cooked during the session will be prepared and cooked following the *Health and Safety Code of Practice – Campfire Cooking*.
- All adults involved in Forest School sessions:
 - Must sign and date the *Sign-Off Sheet* (see the last page of this *Handbook*) to show that they have read this *Handbook* along with the appropriate risk assessments and understand that they must comply with the safety guidelines.
 - Must make sure that children are safe and following the school's policies and rules, and the *Forest School Codes of Practice* and *Risk Assessments*.
 - Must receive a briefing prior to the session about the session's activities and any site-related issues found during the *Daily Site Safety Sweep*.
 - Are expected to model safe, responsible behaviour reflecting the Forest School ethos and the school's *Rainbow Values and Rules*.
 - Must wear appropriate clothing and footwear suited to the weather conditions.
 - Will take an active part in activities with the children.
- Forest Schools aims to be child-led and exploratory experience for children. During activities, adults will support the children but not take over so that they can accomplish a task and develop their self-esteem. Adults should demonstrate how to do things, take an active role, and extend children's learning through open-ended questioning, modelling new skills, and sharing their enjoyment.

Health and Safety

We recognise that good health, safety and wellbeing is integral to our schools organisational as a whole. We are committed to reducing injuries and ill health, protecting the environment and reducing unnecessary losses and liabilities. Our thinking and decisions will always consider the impact on health, safety and wellbeing.

We aim to promote a positive health and safety culture where everybody is required to play a part. We are committed to continuous improvement in health and safety performance and recognise that for health and safety to be effective, all stakeholders must be actively engaged.

The following policies, along with the Forest School specific *Codes of Practice*, *Risk Assessments* and *Risk-Benefit Assessments* contained in the Appendices of this *Handbook*, detail the practical implications of our commitment to health and safety:

- [Asthma Policy \(Combs Ford Primary\)](#)
- [First Aid Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Food Allergy Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Health and Safety Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Risk Assessment Policy \(CET\)](#)

Insurance

The Children's Endeavour Trust subscribes to the DfE Academies [Risk Protection Arrangement](#) (RPA) which provides all its schools with an alternative to commercial insurance. It is not an insurance scheme but is a mechanism through which the costs of risks are covered by government funds.

Training

All staff and adults involved in Forest Schools, are required to sign and date a form to show that they have read this *Handbook*, Health and Safety Codes of Practice, Risk Assessments, Risk-benefit Assessments, and understand how to comply with the safety guidelines.

Training for adults is provided alongside children during Forest School sessions.

Safely Lifting Heavy Objectives

Children and adults must take care when they are lifting or moving heavy items. Everyone must follow the *Risk Assessment – Manual Handling* and the steps outlined below. Remind children, "If it's bigger than you, it takes two".

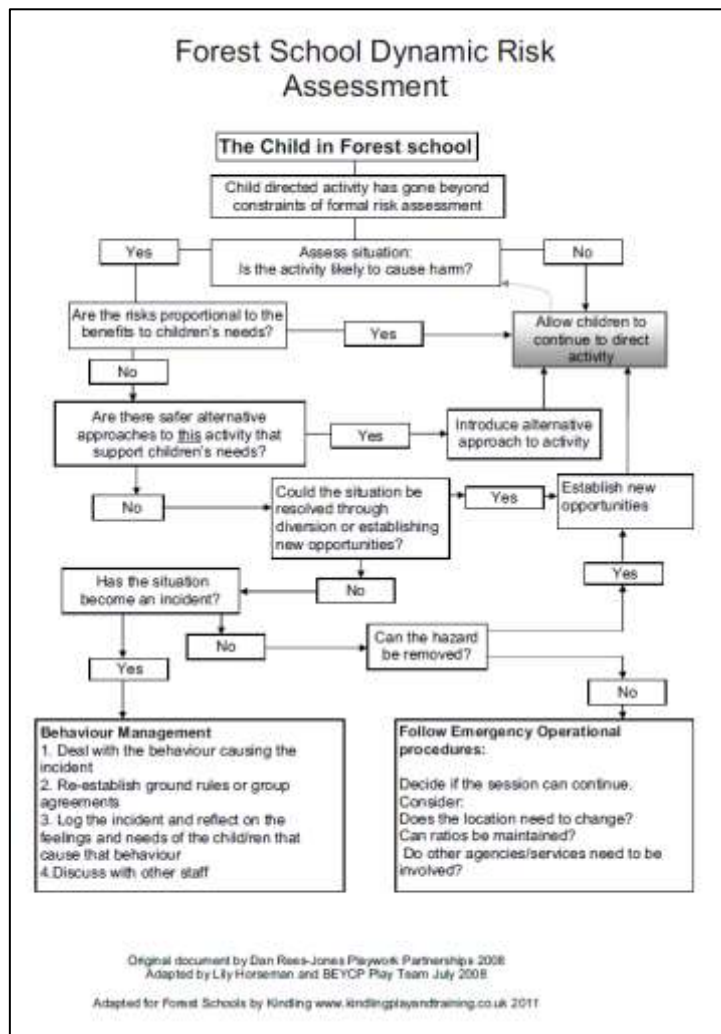
1. Place your feet firmly and shoulder-width apart.
2. Keep your back and neck as straight as possible – do not bend over the object.
3. Bend your knees and squat down, keeping your back straight and looking straight ahead.
4. Get a good grip of the item with both hands ready to lift it.
5. When you put the object back down, repeat the steps above.

Dynamic Risk Assessment

Lily Horseman of [Kindling](#) writes about effective risk assessment as the application of common sense. The definition of common sense is *'your natural ability to make good judgments and to behave in a practical and sensible way'* ([Collins Dictionary](#)). When children are in charge of their own play and learning, the activities that they imagine and enact may not be covered by the risk assessments in the appendices of this *Handbook*. This is where dynamic risk assessment comes in. Lily refers to a series of judgements that take place when a child heads off in an adventurous, risky, self-led opportunity:

1. Step 1: Oooh! Look at that, that's interesting...
2. Step 2: Am I comfortable with that?
3. Step 3: Shall I intervene or is it fine to carry on?
4. Step 4: If we do carry on how will we do that safely?

She adapted a dynamic risk management created by Dan Rees-Jones of the University of Gloucester (and part of the Playwork Partnerships network) into the flowchart below (and in the Appendices). The flowchart maps the decision-making process of using observations, reflecting in that moment, and deciding whether the benefits proportional to the risk.



Daily Site Safety Sweep

A daily site risk assessment (safety sweep – see *Risk Assessment – Daily Site Safety Sweep Record* in Appendices) is carried out by the Forest School Leader before sessions to make sure that there are no changes to the woodland (and any other areas of the school site being used) which could cause harm to children or adults. This is even more important after high winds or other bad weather. Following the safety sweep, the Forest School Leader will carry out anything that is needed to make the site safe (for example, remove any hazards or mark off any unsafe areas) and will consider any specific circumstances (for example, dangerous weather – see below) which make it appropriate to cancel a Forest School session.

Accident and Emergency Procedures (Including First Aid)

Forest School Emergency Kit Bag

This should be on site at all times during a Forest School session.

- First Aid Kit (Fully Stocked)
- Epinephrine autoinjector (in case of anaphylaxis)
- Blanket
- Foil Space Blankets
- Clean Water
- Wet Wipes
- Torch
- Poo Bags
- Disposable Gloves
- Medical Information for Children and Adults
- Individual Medication
- Accident Sheets
- *Forest School Handbook with Health and Safety Codes of Practice, Risk Assessments, and Risk-Benefit Assessments*
- Hand Held 2-Way Radio (Charged)
- Mobile Phone (Charged)
- If a Fire is Being Lit: Fire Safety Equipment – Fire Water Bucket (Full), Fire Gloves, Fire Blanket

First Aid

The framework for responding to a First Aid incident and the recording and reporting of the outcomes are detailed in the Children's Endeavour Trust's [First Aid Policy](#).

A First Aider qualified in Paediatric First Aid and Outdoor First Aid will always be present on the school site during Forest School sessions.

In the event of an accident resulting in injury:

- The closest member of staff present will assess the seriousness of the injury and seek the assistance of a qualified First Aider who will provide the required first aid treatment in the woodland or send the injured child, accompanied by an adult, into school for treatment.
- The First Aider will assess the injury and decide if further assistance is needed from a colleague or the emergency services. They will remain on scene until help arrives.
- The First Aider will also decide whether the injured person should be moved or placed in the recovery position to await the emergency services.
- Two staff will remain with the children who will return to their classroom.
- If the First Aider judges that a child is too unwell to remain in school, families will be contacted and asked to collect their child. Upon their arrival, the First Aider will recommend next steps to the parents.
- If emergency services are called, the Headteacher or First Aider will contact the child's family immediately.

- The First Aider will complete an accident report form on the same day as an incident resulting in an injury.

Missing Child

1. Leader uses a Wolf Call to bring the children back to base.
2. Leader calls out "Sticky elbows!" Children come together and join elbows with the other children in a circle. The children must always have the same child to their right and left.
3. Staff undertake a head count.
4. If a child is missing, the Forest School Leader uses a Walkie-Talkie to alert the school office and to ask for any staff not supervising children to aid in the search within the school grounds, bringing Walkie-Talkies with them.
5. Two staff will remain with the children who will return to their classroom.
6. If the child isn't found within the school grounds, staff will expand the search to outside the school grounds, taking Walkie-Talkies with them.
7. Office staff will contact home and try to contact the child via their mobile telephone if known.
8. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), supported by the wider DSL Team, will use professional judgement and risk assess the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the child's whereabouts before notifying the Police. Timeliness should be on a case-by-case basis.

Communication Strategy

The diagram below shows the communication strategies used for Forest School at Combs Ford Primary School. It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to liaise with children, staff, volunteers, families and governors about the timing and content of Forest School sessions and to make the decision about cancelling Forest School due to extreme weather or insufficient numbers of supporting adults. The Forest School Leader carries a walk-talkie and a mobile phone at all times during Forest School sessions.

Children	Staff and Volunteers	Families	Governors
<p>Children are asked to evaluate every Forest School session and to share their ideas for future sessions during Circle Time at the end of each session. This is done with simple questions, for example, "Tell us all something you've enjoyed today and something you'd like to do next time."</p>	<p>All adults leading or supporting sessions must sign and date the <i>Sign-Off Sheet</i> (see the last page of this <i>Handbook</i>) to show that they have read this <i>Handbook</i> along with the appropriate risk assessments and understand that they must comply with the safety guidelines.</p> <p>The Forest School Leader will brief all adults supporting Forest School session in advance by sharing the <i>Forest School Session Plan</i>.</p> <p>All adults will be asked to provide feedback on each session and to share their ideas for future sessions based on their observations of children. This will be done using the <i>Forest School Session Evaluation</i>.</p>	<p>Every year, before children start their Forest School sessions, families will be provided with information about Forest School and the activities that might be offered (see <i>Forest School Letter</i> in the appendices).</p> <p>Forest School may be cancelled at short notice due to extreme weather. The Forest School Leader will check the Met Office weather forecast the day before and make the decision by 12:00 – families will then be informed by email.</p> <p>Families will receive information about Forest School sessions, including session dates and outcomes, through the Families' Monthly Update, the School Website and School Facebook page.</p>	<p>Governors will be updated about Forest School sessions at Governor Meetings and through the termly Headteacher Report.</p> <p>Governors have an open invitation to volunteer to support and monitor Forest School.</p>
<p>Face to Face</p>	<p>Email Face to Face</p>	<p>Email Information for Families Leaflet Families' Monthly Update School Facebook Page School Website</p>	<p>Face to Face Headteacher Report</p>

Forest School Calendar

Forest School Principle 1 states that Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

- Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
- A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
- The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.

To make sure that all our children experience regular Forest School sessions, each class will have six fortnightly Forest School sessions over a twelve week period. Over their time at school, the children will experience the woodland during all four meteorological seasons.

Meteorological Calendar	Months	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Autumn	September						
	October						
	November						
Winter	December						
	January						
	February						
Spring	March						
	April						
	May						
Summer	June						
	July						

Safeguarding, Equality and Inclusion

Safeguarding

We recognise the moral and statutory responsibility placed on all staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We aim to provide a safe and welcoming environment, in which children can learn, underpinned by a culture of openness where both children and adults feel secure, are able to raise concerns and believe they are being listened to, and that appropriate action will be taken to keep them safe.

The following policies detail the practical implications of our commitment to safeguarding children:

- [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Whistleblowing Procedure \(CET\)](#)
- [Acceptable Use of ICT Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Anti-Bullying Policy \(Combs Ford Primary\)](#)
- [Behaviour for Learning Policy \(Combs Ford Primary\)](#)
- [Child-on-Child Abuse Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Employees \(CET\)](#)
- [Low Level Concerns Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Safer Recruitment and Selection Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Single Central Record Policy \(CET\)](#)
- [Tackling Extremism Policy \(CET\)](#)

Safeguarding Checks

All school staff have undergone safeguarding checks (including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks) in line with the *Children's Endeavour Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy*. Regular Forest School volunteers have a similar level of safeguarding checks completed (including DBS checks). This is because the regularity of the volunteering comes under the definition of Regulated Activity outlined in [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#). Occasional Forest School volunteers without the relevant safeguarding checks (including DBS checks) will not be left unsupervised with children.

Visitors

Visitors invited to our Forest School can enhance the Forest School community through their own skills and experience. All visitors will go through the school's usual procedures and, unless they have undergone safeguarding checks (including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks) in line with the *Children's Endeavour Trust's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy* which have been recorded on the school's Single Central Record, they will not be left unsupervised with children. Children recognise visitors to the school because they wear a red lanyard.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Our Trust aims to ensure that all personal data collected about staff, pupils, parents, governors, visitors and other individuals is collected, stored and processed in

accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and applies to all personal data, regardless of whether it is in paper or electronic format. The Trust's [Data Protection and Records Management Policy \(CET\)](#) details the practical implications of our commitment to data protection and confidentiality.

In relation to Forest Schools, medical information for each child is obtained at the beginning of the school year and updated throughout the year. The Forest School Leader has a list of specific medical needs for individual children (for example, Asthma, Epilepsy, allergies) which is only shared with adults who need to know to make sure that children are cared for properly. Access to the emergency bag is only for school staff and not for volunteers, visitors or children. Emergency contact information is kept within the school office which is contactable by walkie-talkie.

Photos and Videos

Consent for photographing and videoing children is requested from all families when their child joins the school. If a child does not have permission we avoid photographing and videoing them.

Social Media

The school has an official social media account. Staff members who have not been authorised to manage, or post to, the account, must not access, or attempt to access the account. Those who are authorised to manage the account must ensure that they abide by these guidelines at all times. Staff must exercise caution when using information technology, including social media and online forums and be aware of the risks to themselves and others and the reputation of the school. Guidelines for the use of social media are outlined in the [Acceptable Use of ICT Policy \(CET\)](#) and the [Code of Conduct for Employees \(CET\)](#).

Equality and Inclusion

All schools within Children's Endeavour Trust (CET) aim to meet their obligations under the public sector equality duty by having due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations across all characteristics – between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

We are guided by our commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is encapsulated within the UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award, towards which we are working. We are guided by the 45 Articles from the UNCRC as they cover the protected characteristics under the Equality Act: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

The following policies detail the practical implications of our commitment to equality and inclusion:

- [Accessibility Audit and Plan \(Combs Ford Primary\)](#)
- [Equality Policy and Objectives \(CET\)](#)
- [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) Policy \(Combs Ford Primary\)](#)

Welfare

Behaviour

“At Combs Ford Primary School we believe that good behaviour is central to good education. Our school culture and values are shown through the behaviour of all of us – children, staff and governors. As a school, we manage behaviour well so we can provide a calm, safe and supportive environment which our children want to attend and where they can learn and thrive. Being taught how to behave well and appropriately within the context they’re in is vital for our children to succeed personally.” [Combs Ford Behaviour for Learning Policy](#)

Leaders are responsible for creating a safe community during Forest School sessions, tailoring them to suit the needs of the children and allowing all individuals to be the best version of themselves on any one day.

During Forest School, children and adults are expected to behave in accordance with our [Behaviour for Learning Policy](#) and uphold our Rainbow Values and Rules:

- Respect: I speak and act kindly towards others.
- Compassion: I understand how others feel.
- Self-Awareness: I understand how I feel and how I make others feel.
- Self-Belief: I believe that I can be the best I can be.
- Critical Thinking: I solve problems and make good choices.
- Teamwork: I work well with other people.
- Resilience: I don't give up when things get difficult.

We recognise that the Forest School environment is different to our typical learning environment and, as such, requires additional values and rules for both children and adults. These are agreed at the beginning of every Forest School session. We call these additional behaviours our Forest School Promise:

When we're in the Combs Ford woodland we...

- Look after ourselves.
- Look after each other.
- Look after the woods.

We Look After Ourselves

- Children are encouraged to take risks safely and learn how to look after themselves in a woodland environment. Children are involved in the risk assessment process which gives them the skills to risk assess for themselves.
- Hand washing is essential before eating or drinking and when leaving the woodland.
- Safe lifting is demonstrated by bending knees and keeping backs straight and is always modelled by adults. Heavier objects must be rolled, lifted or carried by people working together.
- Children are permitted to climb trees which have been assessed as safe and encouraged to explore their own limits. Adults are there to observe but not limit children's exploration.

- Using tools safely needs individual responsibility and training. Demonstrations of the safe use of tools are provided to children and adults before each use even if the tools have been used before. This includes safe carrying, use of personal protective equipment, safe working positions and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for. More information can be found in the Tool Use Code of Practice.
- Forest School provides the time and space for the school community to 'just be' and encourages good mental health and wellbeing.

We Look After Each Other

- We treat each other with respect and compassion – at Combs Ford Primary School everyone is equal.
- Children are encouraged to look out for hazards and point them out to each other.
- We create a safe space where everyone feels welcome and included.
- Learning, mobility and dietary needs will be catered for as much as possible.

We Look After the Woodland

- We share the woodland with plants and animals and aim to build meaningful relationships and connections between our school community and the natural world.
- We actively encourage and empower our school community to help to improve biodiversity and take ownership of the woodland.
- We know that our presence will have an impact on our woodland but will mitigate and monitor this with the school community and the help of outside expertise through our environmental impact assessment and woodland management plans.
- We work to 'leave no trace' and always leave the wood as we find it. This includes taking down dens and shelters, removing imported materials, taking away all rubbish and removing signs of fire if we have one.



Weather

Forest School sessions take place in all weather and we ask group leaders and families to ensure that children arrive with appropriate clothing.

The following documents detail the practical implications of our approach to weather at Forest School:

- *Risk Assessment – Daily Site Safety Sweep*
- *Risk Assessment – Weather*

Forest School will only be cancelled or postponed because of the following extreme weather conditions:

High Wind

- If high winds are forecast for the Stowmarket area we will consider the safety of taking children into the woodland.
- A thorough pre-visit will be carried out by the Forest School Leader following high winds before taking groups into the woods.
- On the day, if dangerous trees have been identified on the site then the session will be cancelled.
- It is highly likely that a session will be cancelled if winds reach gale force (37 miles per hour) or exceed Beaufort Wind Force Scale 6 (Strong Breeze) or 7 (Moderate Gale) – see the chart on the next page.

Thunderstorm

- It is not appropriate to be out on a woodland site during a thunderstorm so sessions will be cancelled immediately if storms are forecast.
- If a storm develops unexpectedly when in the woodland, the group will immediately go into the school and watch the storm from indoors.

Extremes of Temperate

- During exceptionally hot conditions children and adults will take plenty of drink breaks and seek shade as much as possible.
- The use of fire will be limited on very dry parched ground due to the risk of spreading.
- During exceptionally cold conditions, consideration should be given to the vulnerability of the group and whether sufficient shelter and appropriate clothing can be provided or warming activities to maintain the morale of the group.
- If these are not possible and the group moral cannot be maintained then sessions will be cancelled.

WIND SPEEDS				
Scale	Description	miles Per hour	Effects	Risk
0	Calm	0-1	smoke rises	
1	Light air	1-3	Smoke drifts	
2	Light breeze	4-7	"Leaves rustle"	
3	Gentle breeze	8-12	"Twigs move"	
4	Moderate breeze	13-18	"Leaves and small branches sway"	
5	Fresh breeze	18-24	small trees sway	
6	Strong breeze	25-31	"Large branches sway"	
7	Moderate gale	32-38	"Whole trees in motion"	
8	Fresh gale	39-46	Twigs break off trees	
9	Strong gale	47-55	Branches break off trees	
10	Whole gale	56-64	Trees uprooted	
11	Storm	65-74	Widespread damage	
12	Hurricane	75+	Devastation	

Designed by Lilly Horseman (kindlingplayandtraining.co.uk)

Clothing

We work on the principle that, *“there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing”*.

Appropriate clothing will protect children and adults from extremes of heat or cold – layers are key in cold weather!

At Forest school we recommend all children and adults wear long sleeves, long trousers and closed-toed shoes to keep covered and reduce the likelihood of cuts and scrapes from play or tool use or other activities. Any child or adult not wearing appropriate clothing may not be able to participate.

Children and families are encouraged to think about the usefulness of their clothing for outdoor activities, and to be aware they are likely to take some of our mud home with them after a session. It’s also worth remembering that in the woods it can often be cooler than expected under the shade of the trees.

This is our recommended Forest School clothing list:

- Long sleeved top
- Full length trousers (or zip-off trousers) – in all seasons
- Long sleeved fleece or jumper
- Warm Socks, and a spare pair
- Closed-toed shoes – no sandals
- Warm boots – wellies can be very cold
- Waterproof coat with a hood
- Waterproof trousers
- Gloves, scarves and a woolly hat
- Sun hat
- In winter – layers (including socks)



Toileting

- As the woodland is on the school site, children will use the school toilets.
- Children will always use the toilet before leaving school and going to the woodland.
- In the case of an emergency, older children can return to school in pairs to use the toilet.
- If an adult needs to escort younger children to the toilet, the Forest School Leader will be informed before leaving the woodland.
- Only school staff can assist children with going to the toilet.
- If a child has a toileting accident on site, the child will be taken by a member of staff into school to be cleaned and changed.
- Tool use may have to stop during toilet visits unless the correct adult to child ratios in the *Code of Practice – Tool Use* can be maintained.

Environmental Statements and Policies

Combs Ford Primary Forest School nurtures respect and care for the natural environment in all its children and adults and involves the whole school community in making decisions about the management of the woodland and wider school grounds.

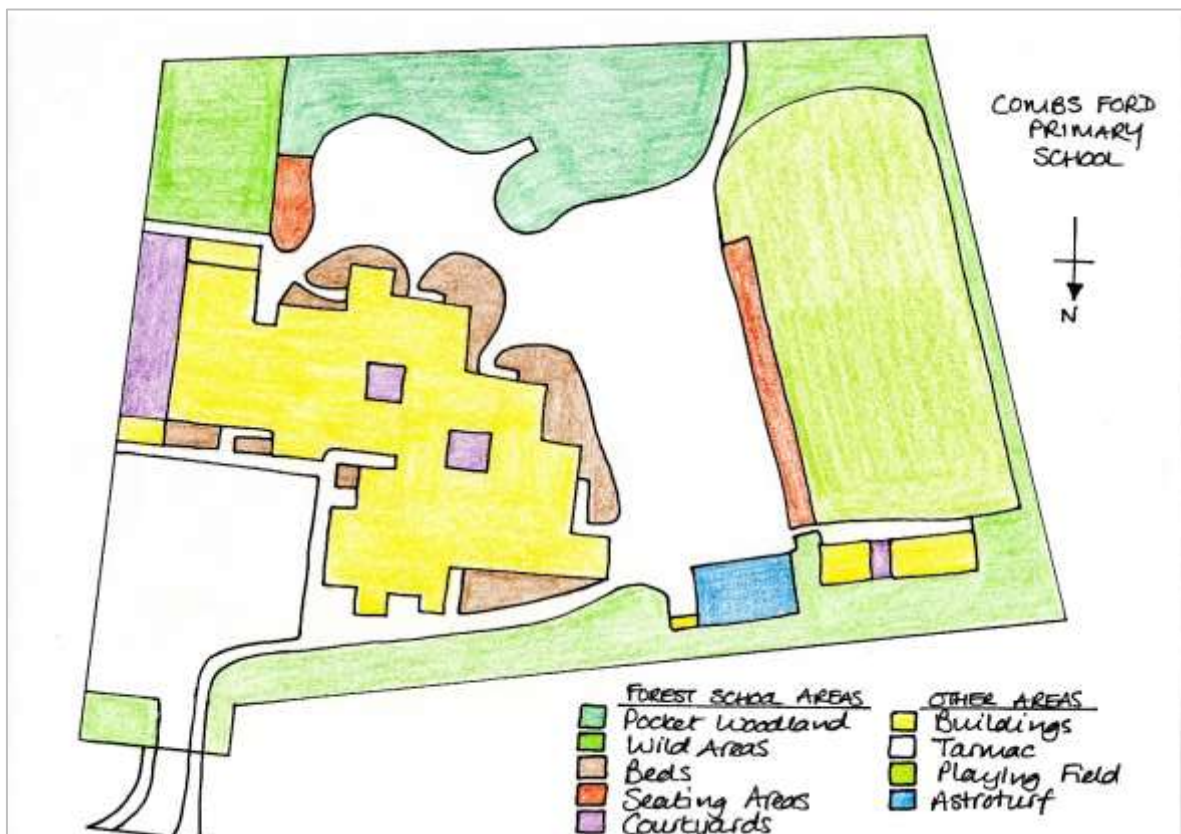
Forest School Principle 2 states that, “*Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.*” The principle, taken from the [Forest School Association](#), goes on to say:

- *A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner and manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.*
- *Forest School aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.*

Forest School sessions regularly involve children and adults in the ongoing ecological survey of trees, shrubs, field and ground layer plants, fungi, birds, mammals and invertebrates which informs our woodland management plan.

Ecological Impact Assessment and Woodland Management Plan

A detailed *Ecological Impact Assessment and 3 Year Woodland Management Plan* can be found in the appendices.



Appendices

Environmental Policies

- Ecological Impact Assessment and 3 Year Woodland Management Plan
- Woodland Management Calendar

Health and Safety Codes of Practice, Risk Assessments and Risk-Benefit Assessments

- Biotic Detectives (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Campfire Cooking (Health and Safety Code of Practice)
- Campfire Cooking (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Coppicing and Tree Work (Health and Safety Code of Practice)
- Coppicing and Tree Work (Risk Assessment)
- Daily Site Safety Sweep
- Den Building (Health and Safety Code of Practice)
- Den Building (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Fire (Health and Safety Code of Practice)
- Fire (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Forest School Dynamic Risk Assessment
- Forest School (Health and Safety Code of Practice)
- Forest School Site (Risk Assessment)
- Kelly Kettle (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Manual Handling (Risk Assessment)
- Ropes and Knots (Health and Safety Code of Practice)
- Ropes and Knots (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Tool Use (Health and Safety Code of Practice)
- Tool Use (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Tree Climbing (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Using Natural Materials (Risk-Benefit Assessment)
- Weather (Risk Assessment)

Planning Documents

- Combs Ford Primary Forest School Plan (Black and White)
- Combs Ford Primary Forest School (Colour)
- Combs Ford Primary Woodland Plan
- Combs Ford Primary Woodland Plan with Willow Bank
- Forest School Communication Strategy
- Forest School Information for Families Leaflet
- Forest School Medium Term Plan (Blank)
- Forest School Plan (Blank)
- Forest School Reflections (Blank)

References

This Handbook and the associated Codes of Practice, Risk Assessments and Risk-Benefit Assessments are based on documentation from the following sources.

[Belmont Academy, Kent](#) (last accessed on 02 January 2024).

[Bramley Church of England Primary School, Hampshire](#) (last accessed on 02 January 2024).

[Broughton Fields Primary School, Milton Keynes](#) (last accessed on 02 January 2024).

[Combs Ford Primary School's Vision](#) (last accessed on 03 December 2023).

[Dynamic Risk Assessment or 'Shall We Use Our Common Sense?'](#) by [Kindling](#) (last accessed on 03 January 2024).

[Forest School Association](#) (last accessed on 07 January 2024).

[Goxhill Primary School, Humberside](#) (last accessed on 02 January 2024).

[Hedge Management Cycle](#) from *People's Trust for Endangered Species* (last accessed pm 07 January 2024).

[Henley Green Primary School, Coventry](#) (last accessed on 02 January 2024).

[Learning in the Leaves](#) (last accessed on 02 January 2024).

[Nature and Mental Health](#) by Mind (last accessed on 27 December 2023).

[Rewilding Adventure](#) (last accessed on 03 January 2024).

[Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Forest School Handbook](#).

[Royal Forestry Society](#)

[Suffolk Biodiversity information Service](#) (last accessed on 07 January 2024).

[Thornhill Primary School, County Durham](#) (last accessed on 02 January 2024).

[What is Forest School?](#) by the Forest School Association (last accessed on 03 December 2023).

Sign-Off Sheet

I confirm that I have read a copy of the Combs Ford Primary School Forest School Handbook and agree to abide by the policies and procedures it contains.

Name	Organisation	Signature	Date