



**Layston C of E First School**

# **Forest School Policy**

Reviewed May 2023 (SB & EB)

Next review May 2025

**Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed in full by the Governing Body bi-annually.

The policy was last reviewed and agreed by the Governing Body in May 2023.

It is due for review in Summer Term 2025 (up to 2 years from the above date) by the Governing Body.

Signature .....

Date .....

Head Teacher

Signature .....

Date .....

Chair of Governors



## Layston Church of England Primary School

### Forest School Policy

#### Aims

This document contains an overview of Layston Forest School, including ethos, policies and procedures. It is intended to be regularly reviewed and amended in response to:

- Changes to risk assessments, routines and standard procedures as a result of reviewing sessions and programmes;
- Changes in good practice;
- Changes in legislation.

The aim of our Forest School is to teach children to enjoy spending time in nature without leaving a trace that they have been there. In the Forest School learning environment opportunities are presented which require cooperation, as well as working alongside adult leaders and peers to develop strategies for approaching risk within safe boundaries. The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, spirituality, and problem solving and skill development, all through play. By children and adults exploring the natural world together, we hope to acquire a deeper understanding and appreciation of the natural world, how we are intrinsically linked, and how we are created to take care of God's creation.



#### Curriculum

Children are encouraged to develop and use a wide range of skills in their Forest School activities. Activities in Forest School can also be linked back to many areas of the curriculum, developing the children's knowledge and proficiencies in Science, Geography, Art and PSHRE for example, as well as developing their linguistic and mathematical abilities through a variety of outdoor learning experiences. These are detailed in the Forest School Curriculum Map.

#### Mental health & Well-being

The Forest School Lead, Eileen Ballard, and mental Health Lead, Susie Betley, have worked together to develop a Green Therapy document (below) to identify the benefits of Forest School on supporting Mental Health and Well-being for both pupils and staff.

<b>'Green Therapy' – the Benefits of Forest School for PSHRE &amp; Mental Health &amp; Well-being</b>	
<small>Eileen Ballard &amp; Susie Betley Nov 22</small>	
5W2WB - Connect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Connect with environment through changes in seasons and weather</li> <li>✓ Observe &amp; explore the Wild Wood environment</li> <li>✓ Getting muddy, soil is good for the soul</li> <li>✓ Playing in nature with their friends, talking and sharing</li> <li>✓ Planting and then cooking food</li> <li>✓ Forest Art – Andy Goldsworthy</li> <li>✓ Being exposed to fresh air and sunlight</li> </ul>

5W2WB – Take Notice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Noticing seasonal changes</li> <li>✓ Noticing and naming feelings as we try new challenges, developing emotional literacy</li> <li>✓ Cloud watching/mindfulness – reduces stress and anxiety</li> <li>✓ <a href="https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2022/09/science-secrets-forests-nature-well-being-happiness-anxiety-stress/">https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2022/09/science-secrets-forests-nature-well-being-happiness-anxiety-stress/</a></li> </ul>
5W2WB – Keep Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Experiencing fire – safety around fire, the beauty of fire, cooking with fire</li> <li>✓ Learning how to risk assess – Is this tree safe to climb? How do I know?</li> <li>✓ Links to NC/EYFS curriculum – changing seasons, weather, life cycles, identifying habitats, plants, animals (RSPB Big Bird Watch, pond dipping...)</li> <li>✓ Developing physical skills – gross motor (e.g. balance, walk, jump, climb, saw, swing, dig) and fine motor (e.g. peel, whittle, cut, thread, tie, plant)</li> <li>✓ Developing personal and social skills through collaboration, cooperation, negotiation, sharing, turn taking, waiting, listening, engaging, building resilience, having a go, and trying things out</li> </ul>
5W2WB - Give	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Caring for our environment</li> <li>✓ Building habitats and beetle banks</li> <li>✓ Making bird and hedgehog feeders</li> <li>✓ Sharing with our friends, helping others, cooperating and collaborating</li> </ul>
5W2WB – Be Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Climbing trees</li> <li>✓ Digging in the allotment</li> <li>✓ Swinging on swing &amp; in hammock</li> <li>✓ Making art &amp; crafts</li> <li>✓ Balancing on logs</li> <li>✓ Exploring</li> <li>✓ Brash pile 'trampoline'</li> </ul> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;">   </div>

## Environmental Considerations and Conservation

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. Respect for the environment is promoted through session plans, ongoing observation, practical experiences, and discussion about conservation issues. We have woodland management plans and make ecological impact assessments.

When appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources are used to maintain and develop our Forest School Wild Wood site.

## Forest School Woodland Sustainability Plan

It is important to bear in mind the ecological impact of running a Forest School and with that in mind consideration will be given to the following:

- The fire will be contained in a fire bowl which will enable the site to be left unaltered when it has been put out.
- Children will be educated not to pick up anything that is living without leaders' reflection.

## Forest School Woodland Management Plan

### LAYSTON'S 3 YEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WILDWOOD 2023-2026 (review Dec 2026)

Structure	Where	Current Status	Target status	Maintenance	Monitoring	Management	Timescale
Willow Tunnel	Top southern side of school field	Tunnel is patchy, parts of the southern side have gaps where wands have died. Top ends are not all woven in.	All wands to be woven in to provide a thick tunnel for children to run through. Gaps to be filled.	Add mulch, feed and water in dry seasons. New cuttings pushed into empty patches	Check each visit for damage. FS leader attend willow weaving workshop.	Children to help with regular watering. Children remove cuttings & feed into beetle banks	Yr 1 - water, mulch, plant, weave, trim. Improve Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - possibly extend
Suckering & wilding growth	Within the wildwood	Much suckering and wilding growth	Main trees allowed to grow to maturity, remove suckering from pathways and where undergrowth is thick already.	Remove new growth in pathways.	Check each discovery walk	Talk with children about suckering and involve them in looking out for new growth. Remove as and when time allows	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Dead wood	Within the wildwood and on the outside of the boundary	Most deadwood has been removed and is stored in the fire box, the bug hotel and the brash pile	Most deadwood has been removed and is stored in the fire box, the bug hotel and the brash pile	Check in strong winds for more deadwood, knock branches if questionable and remove if dangerous.	Check each morning in risk assessment.	Remove as a priority.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Hedging	External boundaries of the wildwood	Sparse in areas where broadleaf plants have been removed, some deadwood has been removed	To create a thick and well-defined boundary.	Cut back growth, monitor for gaps, plant new native species in gaps, grow new plants in tree nursery.	Check each discovery walk.	Trim in the spring, Trim and replant in the autumn.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Wildflower meadow	Between beetle banks on western boundary of wildwood	Some variety of meadow flowers and grass species evident	To create a species-rich wildflower meadow.	Meadow to be cut and scarified in Autumn, raked over to encourage seeds to be dropped. New local species sown.	Check each discovery walk.	Minimum footfall, cut in autumn, scarify and sow.	Yr 1 - improve Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Shed	In SW corner near gate.	Shed does exist and is used.	Continue using shed, ensuring it offers adequate water proofing in Winter.	Continue to keep locked and tidy. Store bird seed in bin to discourage rodents.	Check each visit for security, tidiness and fire hazards.	FS leader to tidy and keep locked and safe.	Yr 1 - improve Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Bug hotel	Large pile of logs, sticks and leaves on eastern boundary.	Introduce varied piles of logs in dark and sunny areas.	To create a varied environment for different bugs. Standing log piles in dark, wet and sunny areas.	Check that piles are securely pegged in place and that different areas are created by the introduction of hollow stems, twigs, straw and hay.	Check each discovery walk.	Add more deadwood and materials as leaf matter decomposes.	Yr 1 - increase Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Brash pile	Large pile at southern boundary	Large pile	Maintain a pile as a resource for fires, crafts, den-	Children to help add to brash pile from school	Check each discovery walk.	Add more wood as materials decrease.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain

			making and path maintenance.	hedges and leaves.			
Wood supply	Throughout wildwood, fire box near log circle	Wood for use in fire making.	Keep fire box topped up with kindling and wood, to be kept dry for fire wood.	Maintain supply.	Check each discovery walk.	Add more wood as materials decrease.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Log circle	Under King tree	An established, well-used log circle.	Maintain logs and continue to use as a meeting area.	Check logs for rotting and replace. Investigate possibility of acquiring logs from local tree surgeons.	Check each discovery walk.	Replace logs and check regularly for rotting.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Tree nursery	SW corner near shed and gate.	A small nursery exists with some saplings growing.	A nursery of local saplings growing ready for replanting into hedge or wildwood.	Investigate possibility of acquiring new saplings (hazel, hawthorn, ash). Keep weeded, watered and free of cat litter.	Check each discovery walk.	Plant, water, weed and check regularly.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - enlarge Yr 3 - maintain
Beetle banks	At western wildwood boundary.	Beetle banks are subsiding but still substantial, evidence of many bugs and also of them growing over in places.	To maintain height and integrity of banks, to create a habitat.	Large invaders, suckers and wildings to be removed. Sticks, twigs, leaves and other suitable material to be added regularly to beetle banks.	Check each discovery walk.	Add to and replace as required.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Pathways	Through wildwood	Some overgrown, some with suckers growing in the middle, others very well worn. Some very muddy and slippery in wet weather.	Good access in all weather conditions, clear and useable.	Vary use of pathways, rotate activities, cut back growth.	Check each visit.	Use of bark chippings or non-bleached card in wetter, muddy conditions.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Nettles & brambles	In isolated sections.	None	Introduce controlled area of nettles, away from current paths as food for butterflies and other bugs.	Keep under control by cutting back in autumn.	Check each discovery walk.	Cut down in autumn	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Ground cover	Patches throughout wildwood	Some darker areas have very little ground cover, other areas are overgrown.	Varied species allowed to flourish in ground cover.	Rotate activities, allowing space and time for regrowth, avoiding bluebell, bee orchid and cowslip areas.	Check each discovery walk.	Rotate activities to reduce impact on ground cover.	Yr 1 - maintain Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain
Wildlife	Throughout wildwood	Little evidence of mammals, few bird species, many invertebrates and pond creatures.	Evidence of wide variety of wild life.	Identify habitats to be created, food to be provided and pathways to be encouraged to attract wildlife.	Use of camera to monitor badger, fox appearances. Bird spotting (RSPB big bird watch) Check for droppings each visit.	Avoid areas where habitats are in use.	Yr 1 - identify and build habitats Yr 2 - maintain Yr 3 - maintain

## Health and Safety Considerations (Please refer to school's Health and Safety policy)

The health and safety of the adults and children is paramount at all times. Safe practice is reinforced by means of regular reminders. The Forest School programme provides children with opportunities to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. They develop early risk assessment strategies and understand that all actions have consequences, whether negative or positive.

Forest School Leaders carry out seasonal, daily and activity specific risk assessments to ensure that risk is reduced. These are regularly evaluated, reviewed and updated.

## Layston Wild Wood Site Information

**The woodland site is at:** Layston Church of England First School

**Address:** The Causeway,  
Buntingford,  
Hertfordshire,  
SG9 9EU.

**Emergency Vehicle Access:** From The Causeway, through the upper car park gate, through gate onto top playground, turn right across playground to access slope at its least steep and turn gently to the left and travel 100 yards to the top of the school field. Access to wood is through upper field gate.

**Contact Number:** 01763 271235

**Mobile Phone Signal:** Good

**Grid reference for woodland site area:** TL 36726 29729

**Map:**



**What3words address for King Tree in the Wildwood:** abundance flamingo spoil

**Nearest A + E:** Lister Hospital, Coreys Mill Ln, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 4AB.  
01438 314333

Addenbrookes Hospital, Hills Rd, Cambridge CB2 0QQ. 01223 245151

### **Equal Opportunities (please refer Layston First School's Equal Opportunities scheme)**

All people involved in Forest School sessions are treated with respect. Our priority is to ensure that children and adults have access to a safe and secure environment, in terms of emotional well-being and safety. We would like everyone involved to believe that any contributions they make to our sessions will be listened to and appreciated. Access is limited to people who use wheelchairs but we are prepared to make reasonable adjustments where possible. We understand equality as giving everyone what they need in order to participate fully.

### **Insurance**

Insurance for Forest School activities is included within the school's insurance policy with HCC Insurance.

### **Child Protection, Safeguarding & Duty of Care (please refer Child Protection & Health and Safety policies)**

The Forest School Leader and other involved practitioners (teachers, TAs, volunteers) regard their duty of care when working with children and young people as paramount. To ensure all individuals (children, workers, and volunteers) are safe and protected the following is put in place:

- Everyone involved in Forest School is briefed on health and safety and risk assessments of the site and activities. Staff and volunteers are aware of the school's policies and procedures on: Health and Safety, Child Protection, School Equality Scheme and First Aid. Staff ensure everyone adheres to this.
- All members of staff at Layston Primary School undertake Child Protection training. When concerns are noticed they are reported directly and promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Adele McMurrough) or Deputy DSLs (Susie Betley & Helen Wilcox), to ensure that the school's Child Protection policy is followed at all times.
- Forest School Leaders delivering sessions will have an enhanced level CRB check, as will other members of staff and regular volunteers.



### *Photographs*

Photographs will only be taken by members of staff using school equipment. No images will be put on to the school website or newsletters without the appropriate parental consent having been given (please see class photo consent lists).

### *Fire Alarm*

- On hearing the fire alarm, Forest School practitioners will marshal the Forest School children down to the upper playground in an orderly way for registration.
- In the event of an actual fire, usual school policy will ensue.
- Upon dismissal by head, children will return to their Forest School session.

### *Lockdown*

- On hearing the lockdown alarm, Forest School practitioners will marshal the Forest School children down to the designated Forest School (under horse chestnut tree, by log pile) area in an orderly way for registration.
- In the event of an actual lockdown, usual school policy will ensue.
- Upon dismissal by head, children will return to their Forest School session.

### *Dealing with strangers/members of public and animals*

Children will be informed to never approach any stranger or animal in the Wild Wood area unless under the supervision of an adult.

### *Toileting*

- Children will notify the Forest School Practitioner when they need the toilet.
- The Year Three toilets will be used because the door can be viewed from the Wild Wood. Younger children (YR & Y1) will be escorted by a member of staff.
- Forest School Practitioners will monitor the return of children.

### *Use of Fire*

Agreements on the way in which fire tasks are undertaken will be made between the Forest School leader and the participants at the beginning of each session.

- Supervision of the fire circle by a Forest School Practitioner at all times ensuring safe practice.
- When cooking the relevant Health and Hygiene practices will be followed by all.
- A filled bucket of water will be present next to the fire to extinguish when required.

### *Tool Use*

- Tools will be introduced by the Forest School Practitioners when they feel it is appropriate taking into consideration age and maturity of participants.
- Tools to be kept safely in the Forest School Shed, being counted in and out, and the shed locked unless being directly supervised.
- Tools to be maintained by Forest School Practitioners.
- Tools to be used safely and appropriately in an area specified by Forest School Practitioner with one to one supervision.

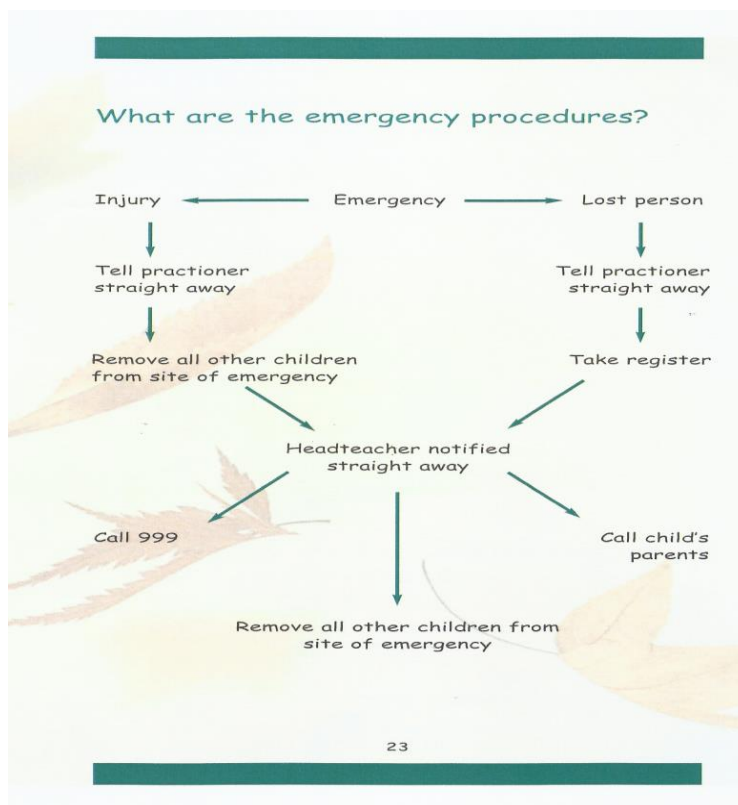
### Tree Climbing

- Any tree climbing will be supervised by an adult, who will firstly check the potential fall area for any hazards or sharp objects.
- Children will be instructed on safe tree climbing practice (3 points of contact at all times).
- Children will be encouraged to climb no higher than they are comfortable with. A maximum height of 2 metres is kept in mind, but will depend on the confidence of the child, the adults comfort zone and the dynamics of the weather, the group and the session.
- Most of the Layston Wild Wood trees are of a small size and so a maximum of two children will be in any one tree.

### First Aid (please refer to First Aid Policy)

- Forest School Practitioners are trained in Remote Emergency Care - 16hrs. All staff are trained in first aid.
- Children will notify an adult in the case of any injury.
- An assessment will be made whether the injury can be dealt with in the Wild Wood using the First Aid bag in the Forest School shed.
- Any situation better dealt with in school will be done so by a member of staff that has been summoned by mobile. Normal school first aid procedure will apply.
- There is a photographic list of all children with specific medical information at the entrance to the shed which is updated as changes happen.

### Major Incident or Missing Child



- Refer to above flow chart for procedure.

- Forest School leader or member of staff to administer first aid to the casualty in first instance.
- If an accident occurs to a pupil, member of staff or a visitor where outside services have been required, then the LEA must be informed ASAP. This will be done through the school office.
- In the event of serious injury (this includes amputation, serious burns, acute illness, fracture, loss of sight or consciousness, or if detained in hospital over 24 hours, or death) in addition to the LEA, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) must be informed, these notifications are a legal requirement.
- The 'Accident Report Form' requires a written statement be made with reference to the sequence of events, actions taken and responses and times of these actions. Names of witnesses should be recorded. The statement should then be signed dated and given to the Head teacher. It will be photocopied and the original sent to the LEA.
- Copies of the 'Accident Report Form' will be filed in a cabinet located in the School office.
- The process outlined above is of vital importance to the enquiry which will follow a serious accident and will be critical to any action for further action or compensation claim.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

There will be a minimum of two adults to support for half a class in Forest School.

#### *Forest School Practitioner*

The FS Practitioner will have a fully recognised Level Three Forest School qualification and have overall responsibility for:

- Planning of sessions including boundaries, activities and ethos.
- Liaison with school staff and governors.
- Safety and risk assessments including pre-checks (site and kit).
- Administration of first aid when necessary and responsibility of the first aid kit, write ups in accident book, mobile phone.
- Supervision of tool use and all tool kit security.
- Informed and understands the SEND needs within the group and of individuals.
- Ensures everyone follows procedures.
- Evaluations/Reports.
- Creation and implementation of the Woodland Management plan.
- Writing, implementing and evaluating seasonal, daily and activity risk assessments.

#### *Volunteers and trainees*

- Will be delegated jobs
- Will be trained and model good practice
- Will support and talk to children, extending their learning appropriately

## **Forest School Dress**

Forest School Uniform (joggers, sweatshirt, and appropriate footwear) is worn at all times. Bare arms or legs are strongly discouraged in all weather conditions due to the nature of the Wild Wood. School provides waterproofs, which are worn when appropriate (i.e. wet, cold or muddy conditions). Spare hats, warm gloves and protective gloves are available to the children. It is the responsibility of parents to provide application of sunscreen and provide sun hats during hot weather as well as appropriate layering when cold.

### **The legal framework for this guidance is:**

In loco parentis

Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)

Health and Safety (first Aid) Regulations (1981)

Children Act (1989)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Regulations (1992)

Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) (1995)

The Protection of Children Act (1999)

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (2002)

Children Act (2004)

Race Relations Act 1976

Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

Sex Discrimination Act 1986 Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

## **Evaluation Procedure**

The Forest School Leader overseen by the Deputy Head, will ensure the Forest School programme is progressive, and undertakes to reflect and evaluate each session after completion. The Forest School Leader will reflect and act on evaluations from children and other staff members to inform future planning. Session reports will be available in order to enhance the teaching of children as well as a communication conduit between teaching staff, the head and any other parties in which it would benefit the children. This will help to promote understanding of the benefits of the Forest School ethos.