

Doverly Down Lower School

and

Doverly Acorns Pre-School

Forest Fun Handbook



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“What is Forest Fun?”

Forest Fun is a lot of things and offers a lot of things . . .

It's where the walls and constraints of the indoor environment are removed to allow the learner freedom and fresh air.

Through practical activities, which can be linked to any curriculum or programme, all are given the opportunity to explore the unique natural world.

These activities are supervised by suitably qualified staff and are carefully planned to allow all learners to work within their own limits, as well as offering the opportunity to embrace new experiences and succeed.

Forest Fun is delivered throughout the year, therefore offering the participants the opportunity to experience and hopefully value all seasons, all weathers and the natural world around them.

Doverly Down Lower School and Doverly Acorns Pre-School has a small woodland area, as well as rural open spaces, within the school grounds. This is where most of the Forest Fun activities will take place using the agreed access routes.

The impact on the environment will be kept to a minimum to maintain the natural habitat. Resourcing materials from the environment will be done sympathetically, for example we will cut branches from different trees/areas to avoid any significant change.

Irregular occurrences and/or poor weather conditions may mean the Forest Fun teacher alters the planned activity during the session.

Aims and Objectives

Children are naturally inquisitive and we aim to give them a positive and motivational environment to encourage them to take risks; make choices and initiate learning within the boundaries set, which will undoubtedly build greater self-esteem and self-confidence. We aim to provide an environment where all feel equally valued and included.

Through carefully planned activities the environment will give the learner time to work with a small group, discuss their learning and the opportunity to cooperate and build positive relationships with peers and adults. We aim to offer an understanding and appreciation of the world around us locally as well as worldwide.

The activities will be planned by the Forest Fun teacher who will assess the capabilities of the learners taking part and amend the plans to offer an inclusive curriculum. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and value the differences they see in each other.

Forest Fun is designed to be a happy time and is planned to offer a positive experience for everyone taking part.

Staff and Helpers

The sessions will be delivered by our Forest Fun class teacher and will be supported by at least one additional adult. All adults will hold a current disclosure check (DBS/CRB).

We always have staff in school who hold current First Aid Certificates. A defibrillator is located in the school medical room.

Details of the current School Insurance Policy is available in the Staff Room and School Office.

All adults have a duty to follow the Forest Fun Policies and Procedures and should familiarise themselves with the contents of the Handbook, following the instructions to ensure the safety of the group at all times. After being given the opportunity to clarify any questions all staff/volunteers will be asked to sign to indicate acceptance.

It is important the adults follow the child initiated learning, observing and recording the learning opportunity. The adult should only join in when necessary to maximise the opportunity.

Examples of Activities

The opportunities outdoors are endless. Listed below are just a few ideas, the changing seasons and weather conditions would need to be taken into consideration when planning the activities.

- Animal Feeders
- Blind Trail
- Cloud Spotting
- Dream Catchers
- Footprint Casts
- Games
- Insect Hotel
- Jewellery Making
- Knots and Lashings
- Map Designs
- Mobiles
- Mud Painting
- Mud Sculptures
- Mud Slides
- Music Makers
- Natural Curtain
- Natural Friends
- Puppets and Storytelling
- Sawing – natural press
- Seasonal Awareness Samplers/bookmarks
- Shelter/Den Building
- Skeletons
- Tracking

- Tree and Leaf/Plant Identification
- Tree Faces
- Weaving
- Welly Walk to Explore/observe the Environment

Kit Bag

The Forest Fun Kit Bag should be available at all sessions and should consist of the following items:

- First Aid Kit - gauze; foil blanket; bandages including a triangular bandage; sterile wipes (non-alcoholic); plasters (hypoallergenic); plastic gloves (non-latex); sterile water; pen and paper (accident sheets).
- Any personal medication.
- Group register, emergency contacts and consent forms.
- Emergency procedure.
- Risk assessment and session plan.
- Mobile 'phone (112 for an emergency).
- Boundary tape/flags.
- Wipes and sanitiser for cleaning hands and a water spray.
- Whistle.
- Bin bags.
- Tarpaulin.
- Tissues (nose and toilet).

Other items available on site:

- Snack.
- Spare clothing for child and adult (available at site).
- Bivi-bag.
- Sleeping bag/fleece blanket.
- Emergency shelter (parachute).

Other additional resource items which will be specific for the planned activity will be listed on the session plan.

Craft Box

- Glue sticks.
- String & twine.
- Selection of wool/ribbons.
- Colouring crayons.
- Wax crayons.
- Felt tip pens.
- Pens & pencils.
- Sticky tape.
- Double sided tape.
- Blutac.
- Scissors.

Resources

Equipment		Usage
Tarpaulins	Various sizes	Ground Cover and/or Shelter
Non-nylon Protective Gloves	Selection of sizes	Must be worn at all times when using tools (worn on non-tool hand)
Vegetable Peeler	Ideally one per person and a selection of designs	Whittling and/or shaping sticks (1:2 ratio, kneeling on dominant knee and directing tool away from the body)
Penknife	Short folding round ended blade and ideally one per person	Cutting
Flat ended tent peg	Ideally one per person	To secure tarpaulin Poke softwood (1:2 ratio, kneeling on dominant knee and directing tool away from the body)
Hand drill	Selection of wood bit sizes	Boring holes into wood (1:1 ratio, kneeling on dominant knee and drilling onto a flat stable surface)
Kneeling Mats	Ideally one per person	Sitting and/or kneeling on
Bow Saw	(600mm) with blade cover and a 'dry' blade	Used when cross cutting branches (1:1 ratio ensuring blade movement is at the side of the body)
Hack Saw	(300mm)	Sawing (1:1 ratio ensuring blade movement is at the side of the body)
Garden Pruning Saw	With fold out safety blade (children hold both hands on the handle)	Pruning trees (1:1 ratio)
Anvil Loppers	With extending handles	Cutting and/or pruning branches the diameter of a finger and to approximately 3-5 cm long (1:1 ratio)
Anvil Secateurs	Young children should avoid this tool as their hands are too close to the	Cutting and/or pruning

	blade	
Bill Hook	Devon or other one sided blade	Cutting (1:1 ratio)
Toolbox	Ideally lockable when stored (and/or locked storeroom)	Keeping tools and equipment stored safely
Rope/twine	Selection	Securing items together
Water Bottle		Transporting water
Kelly Kettle		Heating water
Fire lighting kit	Long stick matches Fire steels Cotton wool	Making fires

Tools should be cleaned and checked for possible wear-and-tear after an activity session.

Tool safety

- Tools must be kept in a suitable container and must be given out to the children (they must not be allowed to help themselves). Adults should model the correct use and storage of the tools.
- When giving a tool to another person spoken commands and acknowledgements must be given eg. "Are you ready?" "Yes I am ready" "I am passing you the tool (by name)". The same principle applies when working with a partner.
- Safety gloves must only be used on non-tool hands. A bare hand is necessary to ensure a secure grip on the tool.
- If possible equipment and tools should be bright coloured so they can be seen easily and must not have ratchet mechanisms.
- Tools will be inspected before each session to ensure safety. It is important that use of tools and safety talk is given before using tools and they are all checked/counted back into the toolbox before leaving site.
- Tool guards must be replaced immediately after use.
- Retractable tools must be closed immediately after use.
- The staff to child ratio should be 1:1 when using saws and knives (opened and closed by Forest Staff/adult). The child ratio can be increased with tools such as peelers.
- Tools will be removed from learners who do not follow the tool safety instructions.
- The Forest Fun sessions will have an impact on the natural environment but we will endeavour to keep this to a minimum to ensure damage limitation.

Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures are required to run Forest Fun activities and are in addition to those currently held for Doverly Down Lower School and Doverly Acorns Pre-School. They apply whether working on or off the school grounds and all adults are required to take reasonable steps to ensure the children are safe at all times.

The policies and procedures will be regularly reviewed following observations and ongoing knowledge of the school setting.

Forest Fun sessions can be physically demanding for all participants. It is important to know your own limits and model safe lifting (plan before lifting, bend knees and in a stable position, avoid twisting and if possible drag objects rather than lifting).

Whilst in the woods we will be taking photographs of things we do and make, there are only a few children who should not be photographed and these must be identified to all adults prior to the session.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

- A child's wellbeing is paramount at all times. If a child tells you something has happened it is important you stay calm and listen.
- Allow the child to do the talking and let them finish what they have to say.
- Make a confidential written record of the conversation, as soon as possible, using the child's own words.
- Do not make any promises to keep secrets.

- Reassure the child but do tell them what you are going to do or who you will pass details of the conversation to. This could be the Forest Fun teacher (who will advise on the appropriate course of action) and/or the Head Teacher, Mrs Debra Brewster, as Child Protection Officer.

Behaviour

- Session routines should be standardised so that all participants know what happens before, during and after a session respecting the environment at all times.
- All participants should listen carefully and respond appropriately to safety instructions. Adults should model and promote acceptable clearly defined behaviour offering opportunities for the learner to show responsible and respectful behaviour in an outdoor environment.
- Adults to offer praise and positive reinforcement of acceptable behaviour and any specific good work.
- Younger learners will stay within sight of an adult at all times. Older learners may explore the area within the designated boundary. Regular 'head-counts' should be carried out and if a learner is found to be missing the activity should be suspended and selected adults deployed to carry out a search (no more than 5 minutes). The remaining learners should be given a low risk activity localised to base and keeping any anxiety for the group to a minimum. If after 5 minutes the learner has not been located the school office should be contacted as well as the police. Details of the situation should be recorded and signed by staff.
- To maximise achievements and raise self-esteem the activities will take into consideration different learning styles and schemas so that the learners will be able to demonstrate good work and support good behaviour.
- To ensure the safety of the group unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with by verbally reminding the learner of the importance of acceptable behaviour, time out from the activity and/or removal from the area. If it is felt the actions/behaviour was unsafe and put themselves or others at risk the learner will be excluded from subsequent sessions.
- Observations/incidents must always be recorded.

Equal Opportunities (inclusion)

Forest Fun aims to offer an inclusive learning environment offering adaptable activities to give all learners opportunities to participate according to their individual needs.

Health and Safety

- A site visit and risk assessment (5-steps) should be carried out each year and during each session. Any finding should be recorded and any changes made if appropriate. This should be signed. If any long term actions if required, name the person who will be responsible for this.
- Occasionally a change in weather before or during an activity could result in changes to the planned activity i.e. lightening or strong winds.

- Statutory ratios should be followed at all times and lowered for sessions using tools so that the risk level is low.
- Dovere Down Forest Fun does not advocate tree climbing although learners are permitted to walk on and over fallen branches.
- The use of voice level to set perimeter boundaries i.e. get the learners to stop walking when they can't hear your voice and that will fix the boundary – start with a loud voice and as they walk away lower your voice.
- The use of recall “1 – 2 – 3 eyes on me” is currently used in parts of the school to gain the full attention of the class/group and will be used within Forest Fun to maintain consistency and safety. “1 – 2 – 3 where are you?” or 3 quick blows of the whistle, can be used if learners are exploring the area (within the designated boundary) and it is necessary for them to stop and show where they are.
- Within the outdoor environment there are many hazards that the learners are encouraged to be aware of, identify and know how to react. These can be things such as uneven ground, holes, nettles and brambles, berries and fungi, sticks or low hung branches, animal faeces.
- Give all members of the session the opportunity to look after their own and others safety offering them the time to assess and share any risk they notice.

Clothing

- Long trousers and long sleeves must be worn at all times.
- Dovere Down Reception has a selection of waterproof outer clothing but it is advisable to send children's own outdoor clothes into school.
- Parents should provide hats and gloves in the colder months and sun hats in the warmer weather.
- Footwear should be either wellington boots (additional socks may be worn in the colder months) or other suitable footwear.
- Depending on the activity and location, a named change of clothes should be provided.

Refreshments

- The children are advised that when on a Forest Fun activity we adhere to the rule 'nil-by-mouth' unless it is a commercially available product.
- The teacher will be responsible for checking any allergies.
- During the activity children are advised to keep their hands away from their mouth and face. Wipes and sanitiser available to clean hands.

Shelter and toilets

- Learners should be encouraged to build shelters using natural materials and/or those provided such as tarpaulins.
- Ensure all material which will be buried is biodegradable, if not sure they should be taken away.
- Children are invited to use the toilets before leaving the school classroom but if required the school toilets are close enough for children to access during a session.

Emergency Procedure

- In case of emergency the teacher and other adults will react to ensure the groups safety is paramount, distraction may be necessary for some of the group.
- In minor cases the school office will be contacted and arrangements will be made for the parent/carer to be contacted.
- In cases where the emergency services are required they would be called by the school office, as well as the parent/carer.
- Accurate details must be recorded – date, time, location of incident and names of those involved.
- If any journalists make contact they must be referred to the Head Teacher (Mrs Debra Brewster).

Fire Lighting

- There should always be a reason why a fire is lit i.e. to heat water for a drink.
- Storm kettles/Kelly kettles are useful as the fire is contained in the base of the kettle and therefore leaves no evidence of a fire having been lit.
- Clear a suitable patch of ground to prevent the fire spreading.
- A fire needs oxygen, ignition and fuel to burn. The fire hole should face the wind.
- Once a fire has been lit a member of staff should stay with it at all times.
- There should always be a visual boundary around a fire pit of 1.5 metres. Session leaders should practice fire safety with the learners i.e. staying outside the boundary, when moving move backwards away from the fire and travel around the outside of the boundary.
- Older learners can be invited to feed the fire once they have shown they can practice fire safety. No body part should cross over a fire.
- When putting the kettle on the fire hold the sides of the handle with the spout away from the hole at the bottom. Never leave the cork in the spout. Remember learners don't need boiling water just a warm drink.
- Be especially careful of items of clothing such as scarves and long hair should be tied back to ensure they are clear of the fire.
- If possible learners should be seated so the wind directs the smoke away from them. If the wind is variable, learners will be advised to turn their head away from any smoke and place their hand across their face, closing their eyes if necessary.
- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session and if appropriate the remains finely scattered the following day.

Evaluation

- Learners are given the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences as well as anything they have made.
- There will be an opportunity for adults to share observations and general session review.

Appendix 1

Risk Assessment

– complete the Written Risk Assessment Form and Area Plan/Map.

- What hazards are there?
- Who might be harmed?
- How might they be harmed?
- Evaluate the risk and decide if any action is necessary.
- Record any findings.
- Review the assessment and note who is responsible for any action.
- Review regularly; remember this can be affected by weather and seasons.
- Adults to be responsible for teaching learners skills to keep themselves and others safe, particularly when using tools and fire.



DOVER DOWN LOWER SCHOOL RISK ASSESSMENT

Forest Fun						
SIGNIFICANT HAZARDS		ASSESSMENT OF RISK				
No.	Type	Significant Risk Yes/No	Low	Med	Med to High	High
1.	Thorns and Nettles		X			
2.	Falling Branches		X			
3.	Trip Hazards – roots and fallen branches		X			

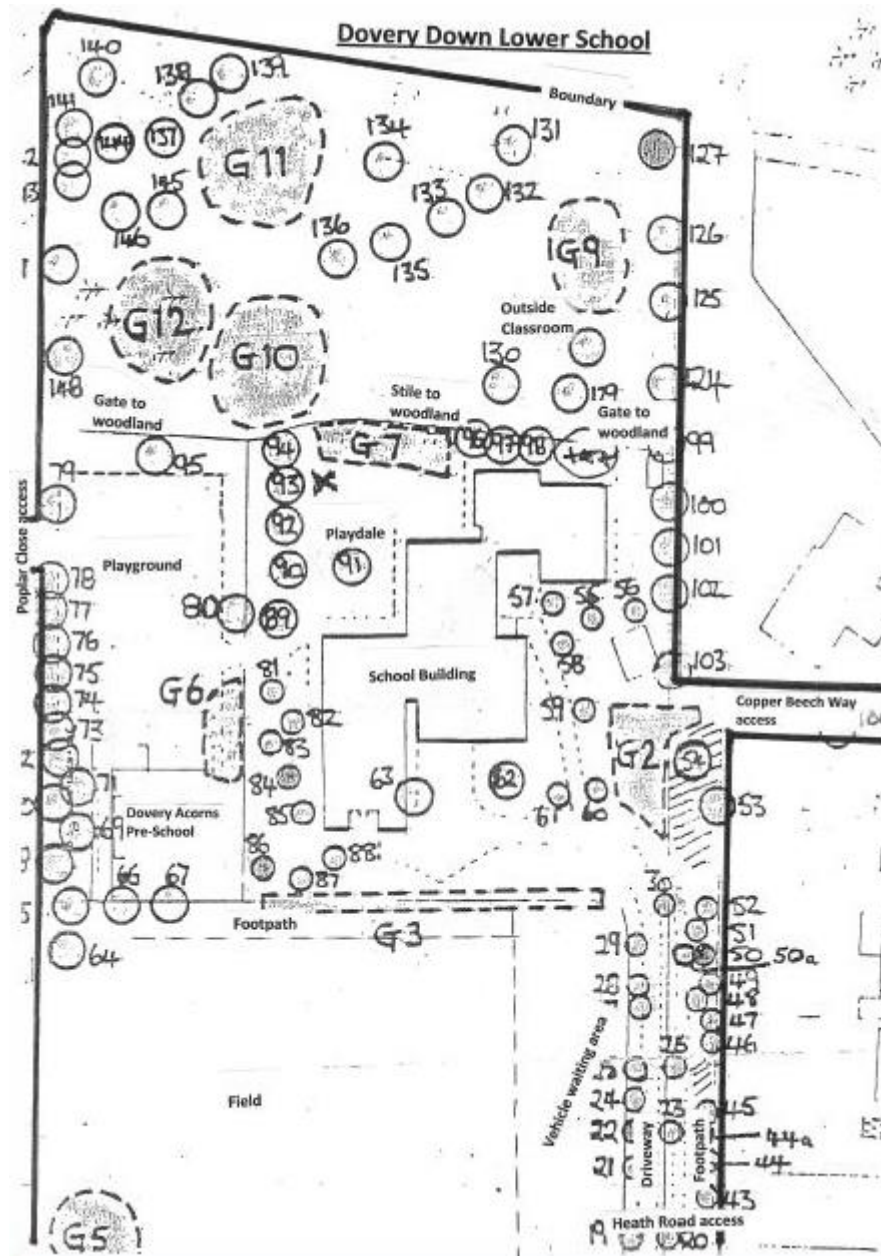
What is the HAZZARD	WHO will be harmed and HOW	Short Term Actions (relevant to all hazards listed)	Long Term Actions (relevant to all hazards listed)
Thorns and nettles	Children may get scratched or stung on bare skin	Treat if necessary (wash/dress)	Ensure arms and legs are always covered. Children to be made aware
Falling branches	Children/adults may get struck from above	Avoid woods in extreme weather conditions. Report any trees as necessary	Remove any loose/hanging branches
Trip hazards	Children may fall and suffer bruising	Children to walk carefully and to watch their step	Clear the pathways as necessary

During an activity the Group Leader may make alterations to the planned activity due to unforeseen circumstances which may increase the Level of Risk. These must be detailed as evidence of the change.

Reviewed by:	Mrs Debra Brewster
Date of last revision	24/11/20
Date of next revision:	24/11/21

Qualified/experienced staff	Leader: Other Adults:
Qualified First Aider	
Disclosure Check (DBS/CRB)	
Ratio	
Parents' Permission, medical information & contact	In folder in kit bag
Public Liability Insurance	School Insurance
Permission from land owner	
Pre-visit	Date and Time: Weekly school site visit. 24 hours before and on the morning of the session.

Area Plan/Map



Appendix 2

If required – Sample Letter to Parent/Carer

Dear Parent/Carer

We are pleased to offer the children at Doverly Down Lower School and Doverly Acorns Pre-School, the opportunity to take part in Outside Learning and Forest Fun activities/sessions.

Forest Fun operates in all weathers so children will need to dress appropriately and we do have a small stock of waterproof clothing and children should have their own boots in their classroom storage containers.

The sessions will be planned to provide an environment where all feel equally valued and included and a positive experience for all. With this in mind please could you complete and return the slip below as soon as possible.

Whilst in the woods we will be taking photographs of things we do and make and some of these will be available for you to see on the school website under the heading Fun in the Forest.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Debra Brewster
Headteacher

Questionnaire/permission form

I give permission for my child to attend the Forest Fun sessions. I do/do not wish my child to be photographed.

Is there any activity/task that your child might find difficult for health or mobility reasons?

Is your child taking any medication that a first aider would need to be aware of?

To ensure the group's safety is there any additional information you think we should be aware of?

I agree/do not agree to my child receiving emergency medical treatment. I will keep the class teacher informed of any changes to medical information.

Signed: Date:

Print Name:..... Emergency Contact Number: