



Nonsuch
Primary School



Forest School Parent Handbook 2025

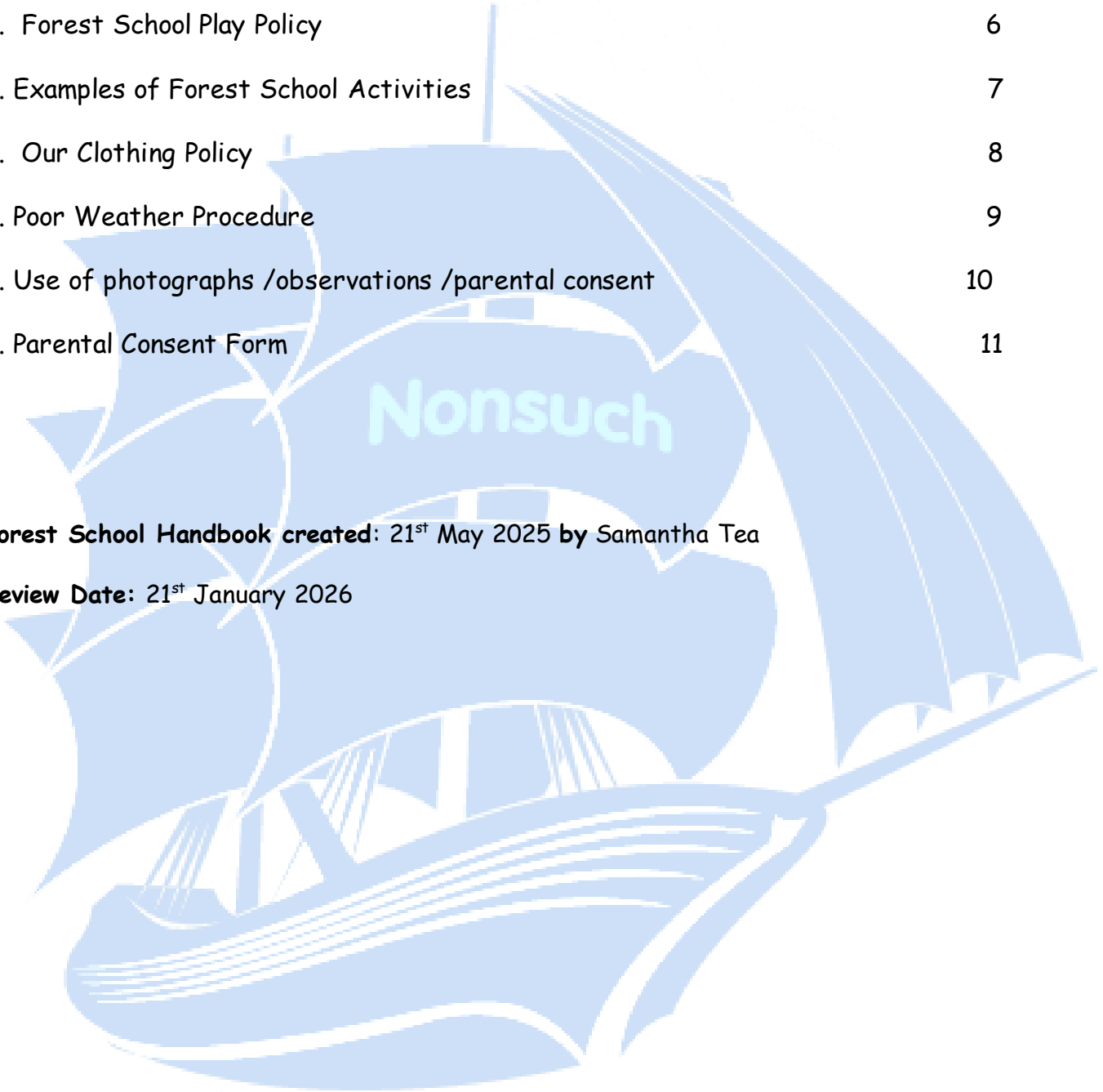
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What is Forest School?

Forest School was established in the 1950's in the Scandinavian countries as a child-centered approach to learning in the outdoors with its pedagogical roots going back to the 1800's. It is an "inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment." (FSA) It is highly influential on both children and adults and helps to bring people back in touch with nature while helping to develop the learner physically and emotionally through a range of processes.

Forest School allows for deeper learning experiences as it focuses on the journey that the children undertake while exploring the natural environment rather than the end product. It enables the children to explore and learn new skills, take on challenges, accept responsibility and to take supported risks through different activities including, using small hand tools to cut and chop wood.

Brief Background of Forest School in the UK

In 1993, Forest School in the UK was developed following the visit of a group of nursery nurses at Bridgewater Collage, Somerset to Denmark where they observed the potential benefits of the Scandinavian (frulitsliv) way of live which focused heavily on "child-centered play based pedagogy." They adapted and developed their own version of the Danish model of Forest School upon their arrival back in the UK. The rise and success in Forest School was so instrumental that there are now a large number of forest schools within the UK.

In May 2004, Forest School became established in Birmingham through a Birmingham Forest Education Initiative Cluster group and the founding partners included "Birmingham City Council (Ranger Service - Parks Sports and Events and Study Support), Groundwork Birmingham and CSV Environment with new members joining all the time."

Our Forest School Ethos

At Nonsuch, we will strive to provide a range of outdoor play activities that will help learners to recognise and manage risks effectively and to help them to realise their potential in an environment where they feel that they belong whatever their needs or abilities.

Our Forest School sessions will provide a deep learning experience and opportunities for practical application of new skills / learning through a range of processes.

This should help our learners to:

Develop their emotional intelligence - social skills, self-awareness, self-motivation and empathy.

Understand and manage their emotions and feelings in a more effective and positive way.

- Grow as individuals

Develop positive behaviours and self-esteem through building trusting relationships between learners and supporting adults.

Review and reflect on their personal achievements.

Become more confident, happy learners by raising self - esteem and breaking the cycle of negative behaviours.

General Information about Forest School at Nonsuch

Location

Generally, Forest School sessions will be held on our own school premises however, on occasions Forest School sessions may be held on alternative sites. When this occurs parents will be informed prior to the session.

Sessions

Forest School sessions will be organised so that they are run on the same day each week, except for an unexpected change in the timetable. Sessions may take place in the morning or afternoon. Parents will be informed prior to Forest School sessions starting for their child's year group so that they are aware that are taking place. Sessions will take place in all weathers except for in extreme circumstances. If a forest school session is cancelled, normal curriculum activities will resume.

Our Forest School Rules and Behaviour

The school behaviour policy will be followed (see school website). To see additional amendment specific to Forest School, please ask to see the staff Forest School Handbook.

Clothing

The clothing that your child is expected to wear is outlined in our clothing policy on page 8 of the handbook. If your child requires any additional clothing or any other personal items for forest school then the Forest School leader or class teacher will ask for this verbally, in writing or using the school text messaging service.

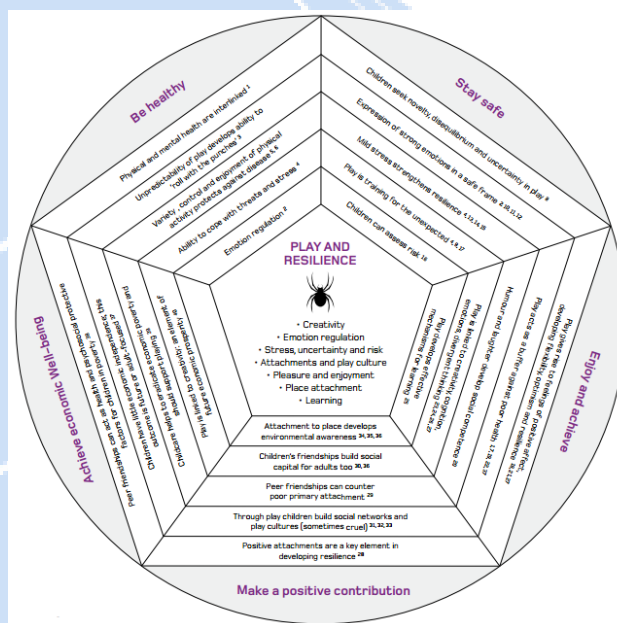
Questions regarding Forest School

Please feel free to speak to the Forest School leader/s, if you have any questions or concerns relating to Forest School sessions. If you would like more information regarding our policies and procedures for Health and Safety, use of tools and fire then please ask to view our Forest School staff Handbook.

Nonsuch Forest School Play Policy

Why should children be given the opportunity to play outside?

A Forest School programme is beneficial in fostering positive forms of play that help benefit the individual child in becoming a more well -rounded person with higher levels of self- esteem over time. It is important in a child's education to have a range of opportunities to experience adult directed and freely chosen self-directed play as it develops their resilience, positive attitudes and relationships towards others. It is also beneficial in the fact that "play can make a significant contribution in broad, principled terms to the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda (*1) as shown below in the spider web diagram:



At Nonsuch Primary School we understand that play has an significant impact on children's lives and aim to provide a stimulating but challenging environment in which the children can explore, develop and create their own experiences while trying our best to ensure "that they have the freedom to play without coming to serious physical or emotional harm through carefully managed play opportunities." (2*) This is important as some of the children will have limited opportunities for play with their peers outside of break times at school and therefore, need to be given the time and space to play freely as part of their school week. As play is one of the most important aspects of a child's life and positively contributes to their health, well - being and happiness as well as to their learning and ability to learn. We believe that we can make a very positive contribution to children's lives by valuing their urge and desire to play and will aim to provide a broad range of play opportunities through Forest School.

"We recognise that children will naturally create or seek out challenging situations; while making the most of their play some children may have accidents, get dirty or wet or upset. We recognise that any potential risk of harm to children needs to be balanced with the potential for good that may come from their taking part in a particular form of play." (Wales 2*)

Play Policy adapted from the following website: www.playwales.org.uk/.../Schools/Sample%20School%20Play%20Policy. For play policy (2*) Acknowledgements : (*1) <http://www.playengland.org.uk/media/120519/play-for-a-change-summary.pdf>

Examples of Forest School activities

During Forest School sessions the children will have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities. This is a list of possible activities that your child might participate in but there are many more activities that they will have the opportunity to experience during their time at Forest School and will vary depending upon the time of year, children's interests and year group.

- Collecting natural materials
- Making Fairy houses using natural materials
- Making animal homes using natural materials
- Making mud faces
- Mud kitchens - making soups and potions
- Mud play - sliding, painting, puddle splashing
- Making Nature crowns
- Dens and Shelter building
- Clay creatures
- Trust / Teamwork games
- Making bows and arrows
- Weaving
- Low level ropes and obstacle courses
- Construction
- Large scale natural artwork using different materials
- Plant and mini-beast identification
- Mini-beast hunts
- Using tools to make objects / woodland crafts
- Learning about use of fire and how to make fire safely
- Story telling
- Using our senses - listening to sounds around us
- Woodland / Nature walks and trails
- Rope work and games

MOST IMPORTANTLY THE CHILDREN WILL HAVE THE OPPURTUNITY TO EXPLORE AND DEVELOP THEIR IMAGINATION!

Our Clothing Policy

At Nonsuch Primary School we require all children to be adequately dressed for Forest School activities. We will require all children to be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear to ensure that they are sufficiently protected throughout the year from the "outdoor elements and the forest school environment."

Forest School leaders and staff will help to ensure that children are appropriately dressed. However, it is expected that parents and children adhere to the clothing policy expectations outlined below to ensure that their child can actively participate in all Forest School sessions.

The school will provide children with the following items of clothing for sessions:

- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof jackets
- Gloves
- Wellies

Parents will be expected to provide all year round:

- A spare change of clothes as clothing will get wet/muddy at times.

In Winter:

- A warm hat (named)
- Warm / spare pair of socks to be worn inside wellies
- Additional layers of clothing when the weather is cold that can get dirty.

In Summer:

- Sun hat (named)
- Sun cream (named)
- Lightweight long sleeved top and trousers to protect from sunburn / nettles / twigs etc.
- Enclosed shoes or boots as an alternative to wellies.

Poor Weather Procedure

In cases of poor weather conditions such as torrential rain, during thunder storms, high winds or during periods of extreme cold Forest School sessions outside will be cancelled for health and safety purposes. Where possible an alternative activity linked to Forest School will take place indoors. If it is expected to be wet then a shelter may be constructed by a trained adult so that there is a sheltered area available.

The Forest School Leaders will check expected weather conditions when poor weather is expected prior to the start of a session using the BBC / Met office website in order to help make the decision about whether the forest school session should take place.

It will not be necessary to inform parents if a forest school session is cancelled due to poor weather as the sessions will be held on site and during normal school hours.

The children will be expected to experience wet / cold conditions as this will help develop coping skills. Forest School will not be cancelled because it's a drizzly or cold.



Parental Consent

Parental Consent for Forest School Participation will be obtained prior to the first session a child attends. An example of the letter used is shown in the handbook on the previous page.

Photographs

Use of photographs will be taken in accordance with the Nonsuch Primary School Consent letter signed by parents or the Forest School Consent letter (see appendix). A list of children who do not have parental consent for use of photographs will be obtained by the Forest School Leaders. Photographs may be used on the school website, frog learning platform or as part of Forest School evidence.

Observations

During Forest School sessions trained staff may be required to undertake observations of the children participating in Forest School as part of the curriculum or for assessment purposes. Observations will be kept confidential.

Parental Consent Form - Nonsuch Primary School

Activity: Forest School

Year:

Child's Name: _____

Age: _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR CHILD

1. Are there any medical conditions requiring medical treatment, including medication? YES /NO
If yes, please give details below:

2. Please outline any special dietary requirements

3. Does your son / daughter have any known allergies? YES /NO
If yes, please specify below:

4. If inhalers for Asthma are used they should be provided by you in school. Does your child have an inhaler?

Yes

5. Please provide your child's Doctor's address:

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

6. As an important part of our evaluation of Forest School and its activities; video, audio and photographic evidence of your child may be recorded, this material may also be used on our school website or learning platform. Please sign to say you consent to this.

Yes

signed:

PARENTAL / CARER DECLARATION

7. I agree to my child having appropriate medical care in the event of an accident OR any First Aid Treatment as deemed necessary by the Qualified First Aid Leader.

Yes

8. I agree to my child participating in Forest School activities including tools and camp fire sessions. I understand the need for my child to behave in a responsible manner.

Yes

9. I will provide my child with suitable clothing and footwear for outdoor wear.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Address: _____
Nonsuch

Contact No: _____

Emergency Contact Number: _____

G.P Name and Address: _____

Appendices

- Example of school consent form for photographs

