



Forest School Policy

June 2024

Approved by the Governing Body Strategy Group 27/06/24

**This Policy is due for renewal in Term 6
2025–2026**

FOREST SCHOOL POLICY

OF

GODINTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

SECTION ONE: INTENT

INTENT (as displayed on our school website)

Forest School is a unique method of outdoor learning which focuses on nurturing children's holistic development. At Godinton Primary School our aim is to encourage and inspire children through positive outdoor experiences, whilst providing them with skills and memories that will last a lifetime. Forest School sessions present children with the opportunity to learn about the outdoor environment, experience how to safely manage risks and how to use their own initiative to solve problems or co-operate with others. Forest School allows children to explore our outdoor environment with practical activities all year round. Alongside learning about the natural world, children have the opportunity to play, learn boundaries of behaviour, develop social skills and grow in both confidence and self-esteem. Our Forest School approach encourages children to become self-motivated and the children's interests are at the heart of all activities planned.

We hope that our children leave Godinton with a respect and fascination for the natural world and the desire to continue exploring the world around them. After their Forest School experiences children will feel confident to take risks and to try something new.

As part of our Guiding Stars curriculum, Forest School is the leading light subject for 'Teamwork'.

Within our Forest School curriculum, the children will work together towards a common goal, negotiating ideas with each other. The children are supported in understanding that sometimes other people might have better ideas than they do and learn to recognise each other's strengths and how to play to these. The children learn how best to listen to and try out the ideas of everyone, making sure that everyone feels included in the challenges they are set as a team. The children help each other to work through personal challenges and to move out of their comfort zones to try new things.

SECTION TWO – TEACHING AND LEARNING STYLE

2.1 We use a variety of teaching and learning styles in Forest School sessions. Our principle aim is to develop children's knowledge, skills and understanding. Sometimes we do this through large group teaching, other times children are given time to engage in an enquiry based research activity. Children are encouraged to ask, as well as answer, question in every session.

During Forest School sessions children have access to a range of materials to support their learning. A selection of books and identification keys are kept on site for children to access when needed. When appropriate, Ipads can be used to help investigate a query further.

Children take part in a wide variety of practical problem-solving activities. At the end of each session, children are encouraged to discuss their learning with the rest of the group. This could involve showcasing something that they have made, explaining something that they have learnt or sharing something that they are particularly proud of. We ensure that children are actively involved in maintaining the Forest School site so that they know that their contribution to sessions matter.

2.2 We recognise that there are children of different abilities and with different prior experiences and exposure to the types of activities in Forest School. We ensure that we provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the individual child. We achieve this in a variety of ways by:

- Adaptive teaching as appropriate, will allow all children to progress in their learning. Setting common tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- Children will be encouraged to record in a range of ways (when required). Forest School staff will carefully identify the reasons for a particular method of recording. Children will record independently when appropriate.
- Providing resources of different complexity, matched appropriately to ability.
- Using teaching assistants to support the work of individual children or groups of children.
- Forest School sessions will make a positive contribution to the curriculum for English, Maths, Science, DT PSHE and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development.

SECTION THREE – FOREST SCHOOL CURRICULUM PLANNING and DELIVERY

3.1 STAFFING

Godinton Primary School will ensure that at least 2 members of staff are trained to deliver Forest School Sessions as Forest School Leaders. This team will have completed the Level 3 Forest School Leaders training as well as the required first aid training.

One Forest School Leader will also fulfil the role of Forest School Coordinator, overseeing Forest School practice at Godinton. Key responsibilities of the Forest School Coordinator include:

- Overseeing Forest School planning and ensuring progression throughout the school
- Keeping key documentation (such as the Forest School Handbook) updated
- Carrying out risk assessments for both the site and sessions
- Being a point of contact for Forest School Leaders
- Ensuring resources for sessions are available and re-ordering when required
- Timetabling sessions and liaising with class teachers
- Communication with parents
- Delivering training and support for Class Teachers and TA
- Delivering Forest School sessions
- Monitoring the teaching of Forest School throughout the year
- Collecting pupil voice and feedback.

The other trained members of the team are Forest School Leaders, with the primary responsibility of delivering sessions to the children. Other key responsibilities include:

- Adapting planning as needed
- Checking the site before each session and completing a safety sweep
- Checking risk assessments and alerting the Forest School Coordinator of any changes needed
- Checking medical needs of the children within their group
- Preparing resources needed for a session and alerting the Forest School Coordinator of any damage to resources/any replacements needed
- Providing feedback to class teachers after a session

Forest School sessions are delivered to groups of approximately 15 children at a time. Each session is led a Forest School Leader with an additional member of staff (usually a teacher or teaching assistant) accompanying the session.

3.2 IMPLEMENTATION

Our Curriculum implementation is below. This information is also provided on our school website.

IMPLEMENTATION

At Godinton Primary School, our Forest School sessions are planned around our Progression of Skills document. All sessions are planned and delivered by our Forest School team and are adapted termly to meet the needs of each group of children.

We ensure that during each block of Forest School sessions, children build upon their previous skills and learning. Each block of lessons has focused activities to support team work, tool skills and an understanding of our natural world.

We deliver a block of Forest School sessions (usually six weeks) to the children each academic year. Our timetable is structured to ensure that throughout their time at Godinton, children experience the forest in all seasons allowing them to witness how our environment changes throughout the year. The children go out in all weathers, all year round to enable them to fully explore the changes that take place. Appropriate clothing is worn, however during high winds, risk assessments may determine that it is unsafe to go into the woods.

Our planning encourages a range of problem-solving opportunities which encourage children to ask questions and to find answers and solutions for themselves. Curiosity is encouraged

during sessions and our Forest School Leaders demonstrate a flexibility to respond to and explore the children's interests. Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves. Therefore, no two Forest School sessions look the same, as the leaders have the skills to adapt sessions to ensure that the interests of the children are the main focus.

At Godinton we are very lucky to have a spacious woodland on site which has endless challenges and learning opportunities for the children. One of the key principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. Adults model how to respect and take a responsibility for the environment and children are encouraged to take on some of this responsibility for themselves. Where appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources are used to develop our forest school site. During every session, children will need to tidy the area that they have used, ensure that they do not damage anything that is growing on site and leave each area as they found it. The Forest School Leaders monitor the site to ensure that no areas become overused. Please see our Woodland Management Plan and Ecological Impact Assessment for further details. These are attached as Appendix 1 in this policy.

SECTION FOUR – FOUNDATION STAGE

EYFS

The EYFS framework is structured very differently to the National Curriculum and it is organised across seven areas of learning rather than subject areas. Whilst Forest School is not a National Curriculum subject, the Forest School curriculum will help to develop children's **Understanding the World, Communication and Language, and Personal, Social and Emotional** knowledge and skills.

Forest school sessions are delivered to our EYFS children throughout the year rather than in a set block in order to enable them to experience the woodland in all seasons.

SECTION FIVE: THE CONTRIBUTION OF FOREST SCHOOL TO OTHER SUBJECTS

5.1 Learning Adventure

When planning our Forest School sessions, we aim to ensure that at least one session incorporates the current topics being taught in the classroom. Forest School gives children the opportunity to use what they have learnt in a new environment.

5.2 English

Speaking and listening forms a large part of Forest School sessions as children are encouraged to share their ideas and learning. Many sessions involve children using their oral storytelling skills and they are encouraged to advance these as they progress through the school.

5.3 Mathematics

The use of mathematical skills regularly naturally occurs in Forest School sessions. Younger children seek patterns in the nature around them and use the natural resources to create patterns of their own. Children may regularly use measuring when creating or building. Through the investigative nature of the sessions, children are regularly required to observe, predict and problem solve.

5.4 Personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship

Forest School makes a significant contribution to the teaching of Personal, Social and Health Education. Children are required to assess risks for themselves and think about the best way to keep themselves and others safe. Working collaboratively with others is vital to the success of many of the tasks that the children are given and they learn the importance of teamwork and working towards a shared goal. Children are also given the opportunity to 'give something back' to the forest and plan their own projects to help the nature and wildlife surrounding Godinton.

5.5 Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

In Forest School sessions children develop a sense of awe and wonder regarding the nature of our world. We plan sessions so that during their time at Godinton children will see the Forest School in all different seasons and explore how these changes have an impact on us. Children are taught the importance of respecting the natural world and given ownership over protecting the wildlife on the Godinton site. Children are given plenty of time to reflect in the fire circle and share their own personal achievements and also celebrate the achievements of other. Children often say they find the fire sessions very relaxing and sitting around the fire gives them a chance for some quieter thinking time.

SECTION SIX: TEACHING SCIENCE TO PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

6.1 Forest School sessions are accessible to all children, whatever their ability or need. Forest School forms part of the school's curriculum policy to provide a broad and balanced education to all children. We provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of children whether they have special educational needs or are academically more able and take into

account the individual targets set for them. Additional adult support may be required to enable some pupils to participate. This will be assessed both in advance of the sessions and during.

SECTION SEVEN: ASSESSMENT AND RECORDING

Monitoring children's achievements and attainments

The Forest School Leaders observe the children in all sessions, making notes which are fed back to their class teacher and guide the content of the future sessions.

Children are given verbal feedback within the session to help guide them and celebrate what they are doing well.

In the final session the Forest School Leaders will encourage the children to celebrate what they have achieved, for example learning to use a new tool correctly or trying something new that they were initially afraid to do.

Monitoring provision for Forest School in the school

- 7.2 Each year the Forest School Leaders will observe lessons being taught across the school. These observations will be used to identify areas of strength and where learning can be better developed in the future.
- 7.3 Each year the Forest School Co-ordinator will check that every class has covered the aspects of Forest School as indicated in the progression of skills document.
- 7.4 The Forest School Co-ordinator will monitor the use of resources throughout the year in order to ensure that the subject is adequately resourced.
- 7.5 The Forest School Co-ordinator will maintain a record of wider opportunities that have been provided for the children.

SECTION EIGHT – RESOURCES

The school provides the necessary resources needed to deliver Forest School sessions to all children. The Forest School co-ordinator manages the budget to ensure that all perishable resources are replenished as required and that equipment remains in good order. The majority of Forest School resources are stored within the vicinity of the Woodland Area.

Tools are an important part of Forest School and enable a range of activities to take place that many children may not have access to. Using tools helps children to develop their fine

motor skills, encourages them to take responsibility for their own safety and can support creative thinking. However, the use of tools does come with some risks involved, especially when children are first getting used to using the tools. Each of the tools used in Forest School is risk assessed and these should be read by all adults using tools with children on site. This risk assessment can be found in the Forest School Handbook. When not in use, tools are locked away in a cupboard in the school building and carried down to the site by an adult when needed. Although children should be taught the possible risks of using tools, they should not be taught to fear them as we would like the children to feel confident when using them.

SECTION NINE – HEALTH AND SAFETY

9.1 On site, the school's Health and Safety Policy, must be followed at all times. This policy takes into consideration the laws regarding Health and Safety in the workplace alongside the best way to keep the children safe. The Forest School Handbook should be read in conjunction with this policy, where full details on risk assessments and procedures can be found. Below, key points are outlined which adults should be particularly aware of during a Forest School Session.

- The Health & Safety policy should be followed at all times and any questions or concerns should be reported to Headteacher, Jill Talbot
- Staff are responsible for their own health and safety and the safety of the children in their care
- Individuals should not misuse equipment or do anything to put themselves or others in any danger
- Any accidents, incidents or near-misses should be reported and recorded in the accident book.

9.2 Risk Assessment and Risk Management

In accordance with the schools Health and Safety Policy, risk assessments should be in place for all activities completed on the school site. Risk assessments for Forest School are completed by Miss Attenborough, approved by Jill Talbot and read by any adults helping or visiting Forest School sessions.

In Forest School we aim to protect children from any major risks, without completely eliminating all risk. Being exposed to and learning how to manage risk is a key part of a child's development in Forest School. Therefore, on each risk assessment is also a risk benefit assessment discussing the benefits the children can gain from this risk.

Risk assessments have been completed for the site, weather conditions, each tool and each activity. These can all be found in the Forest School Handbook produced by the Forest School Coordinator. Risk assessments are reviewed annually by staff, or immediately if an incident occurs.

9.3 Fire Procedures

All adults on site should be aware of the schools Fire Procedures which can be found in the Forest School Handbook. The Fire Procedure for if a fire occurs when out at Forest School, is outlined below.

- The Forest School Leader must be aware of how many children are present at the session and if any have gone back into the school building
- In the case of a fire identified in the school building/the mobiles, the fire alarm will ring. This can also be heard from the Forest School site
- All children line up in the Fire Circle meeting point. The Forest School Leader should count children and escort them onto the playground; here they will line up next to their class and be registered. Children are not to return to the site until deemed safe to do so by SMT.
- Teachers with pupils attending Forest School should have this recorded on their red fire board in the classroom.

9.4 Fire on Forest School Site

At the end of each six week programme, a fire takes place at Forest School for the children to toast marshmallows and reflect on their progress. The Fire Risk Assessment can be found in the Forest School Handbook.

All adults should be aware of both the school's Fire Procedure and have read the Fire risk assessment

- Fires should be contained within the base of the Storm Kettle or fire pit. If anything escapes this it should be distinguished immediately
- Correct PPE should be used and be available: fire gloves, fire blanket, water
- Fire should take place within the fire circle. All children should be sat on outer-edge and are not to move within the fire circle
- An adult is to stay with the fire at all times
- The fire should be fully distinguished before leaving the site and evidence removed
- If fire spreads unreasonably all children to be taken to far-side of the school field and a runner sent to the office immediately to phone fire brigade.

As the Forest School sessions progress throughout the year, fires may happen more frequently. The impact upon the site will be continually monitored by the Forest School Coordinator.

9.5 First Aid

All Forest School Leaders have been trained in outdoor first aid and if able to, will administer first aid in situ. Staff will adhere to the school Medical Needs and First Aid Policy.

A first aid kit should be taken to each session including:

- Clean water
- Gloves
- Plasters
- Bandages
- Swabs
- Tape
- Eye solution (sterile water)
- Anti-septic wipes

The kit should be checked regularly and re-stocked if items are used. Forest School leaders should keep an up-to-date medical list on site at all times and be aware of any allergies or medical conditions. Any additional medication for a child (asthma pumps etc) should be carried onsite with the staff accompanying the sessions.

9.6 Weather Check

Providing that children have appropriate clothing, Forest School sessions should be able to take place in most weather conditions. The local weather forecast (BBC or Met Office) should be checked regularly by the Forest School session leaders to assist with assessing the weather for a session; cancellation should be left as late as possible. Some severe weather conditions may lead to a Forest School session being cancelled:

- Strong winds may result in damage to the trees and branches falling down. The Forest School area should not be entered if there are winds of force 4 or above or if substantial tree branches are seen moving. Branches may drop from trees at any time, but adults and children should be on high-alert after strong winds.
- During heavy rain the ground may become treacherous. Trees should not be climbed during heavy rain and the slope at the field side of Forest School should be avoided.

In torrential rain Forest School Leaders may decide to cancel or shorten the session if activities become unsafe.

- Children's clothes should be checked carefully on cold days to ensure they have enough layers and protection. Adults should monitor children regularly and take them inside if they are not staying warm.
- Due to the thick canopy layer most of the site is protected from intense sun. Children should still have adequate protection (sun hat, sun cream) and be encouraged to drink regularly on hot days.
- In the case of snow, where possible the Forest School session should go ahead if school is open following risk assessment. Children are not to go near sloping edges towards the side of Forest School, appropriate clothing to be worn, session to be shortened and everyone to be aware of large quantities of snow dropping from the trees.

The weather risk assessment can be found in the Forest School Handbook.

SECTION TEN – CHILDREN IN CARE (formerly Looked After Children)

As for all our pupils, Godinton Primary School is committed to helping every Child in Care (CIC) to achieve the highest standards they can. To this end staff will ensure that in delivering the curriculum they set suitable learning challenges of CIC, respond to the diverse learning needs of CIC, and help to overcome the potential barriers to learning and assessment for CIC. The Forest School Coordinator will support staff in doing this within this subject.

SECTION ELEVEN – EQUALITY STATEMENT (Refer also to specific policies for equal opportunities and racial equality)

At Godinton Primary School, we are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all members of our school community irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy or maternity, marriage and civil partnership or socio-economic background. We are determined to develop a culture of inclusion and diversity in which all those connected to the school feel proud of their identity and ability to participate fully in school life.

We tackle discrimination through the positive promotion of equality by challenging stereotypes and by creating an environment that champions respect for all. At Godinton Primary School, we believe that diversity is a strength that should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit us.

All school policies have an explicit aim of promoting equality and will be reviewed in terms of their contribution and effectiveness in achieving this aim.

APPENDIX ONE – WOODLAND MANAGEMENT PLAN AND ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

<p>Name: Godinton Primary School</p>	<p>Location: Godinton Primary School, Lockholt Close, Godinton, Ashford, Kent, TN23 3JR</p>	<p>Grid Reference: 51°09'13.0"N 0°50'37.4"E</p>
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Owner:
Godinton Primary School

General Description:
Godinton Primary School is a two-form entry primary school, nestled in the centre of the Godinton Estate in Ashford. The original building of the school was constructed in 1978 and it has seen many additions and changes since then. The school has extensive outdoor space including: two playgrounds, garden area, a large field and strip of forest area running alongside the field. The forest site has a range of trees, overgrown areas, log piles, dips and is known to be the home to a stream in wetter months. The site offers a wealth of natural challenges for children to navigate.



Situation:
Godinton Primary School is located in a sub-urban area which is surrounded partly by a residential area. The school is just a few miles from the M20 however is still also surrounded by parks and woodland. The housing around the school has increased rapidly in recent years. The school still has close connections with the historical Godinton House which is often visited by the children for learning experiences.

The Forest Site does back onto the gardens of houses, separated by a small footpath (owned by the school). This is something that we will be mindful of and monitor as we increase the number of sessions being held.

Forest School Woodland Description (KS2):

The KS2 Forest School site is located at the edge of the school field, separated by maintained hedges and secure fencing.

There are a variety of native trees located on the site which are maintained by an outside agency who conduct yearly tree surveys. If anything is cut from the trees, it is left in the site for use.



There is a dense canopy layer with a small clearing towards the centre of the forest school area. The site has very uneven ground with frequent dips and a slope towards the field edge of the site. During the summer months little is able to grow on the ground and the floor space is predominantly nettles and brambles, which are cautiously maintained. We aim to leave as much untouched as possible. During winter months, the ground is made of mostly leaf litter, which again we aim to leave untouched. The site is also known to flood and have a small stream running through the lower ground as a result of being a “run-off” for water from the nearby housing estate. A small bridge has been built to connect the main site to the far left (red zone) which is often separated by the stream.

The green zone will be developed as the main forest school area, including the fire pit and seating circle. The red zone has large and fallen trees in the middle and almost a ‘circuit’ shaped path around the edge. We have developed some ‘trim

trail' activities around this path. This can also be used by the wider school community. There is the potential to move the main seating area to the red zone over time if the ground needs a break. We aim to leave the blue zone as untouched as possible and it provides lots of natural resources for den building.

Lots of wildlife is often spotted in and around the woodland area by the children and staff such as: foxes, squirrels, hedgehogs, pheasants, nesting ducks and neighbours cats are often found to be enjoying the site. Due to the array of trees on site many birds are also spotted on site. The environment provided by the range of trees and fallen leaves on site provides a habitat for many mini-beast and wasps, bees and ladybirds are frequently found nesting on site.

We currently have a pond in the garden area which is known to attract frogs and newts.

There are no archaeological considerations, tree protection orders of national nature reserves on site and the trees onsite are all maintained by the school and the local council.

Management History of Site:

Before the Godinton housing estate and school was built, the land had been left mostly untouched and continued from the Godinton House and Garden estate. It has been documented that a previous owner of Godinton House, Major Alan Wyndham Green, fought to prevent houses being built over Godinton as the town of Ashford grew over the 60's and 70's. The Godinton Primary School was opened in 1978 and was converted to an academy in 2015.

The trees have regular surveys and any potential issues such as damage or disease is dealt with immediately to ensure that the trees remain safe. The school has a site manager responsible for maintaining the health and safety of the whole site.

In the lead up to the site being used as a Forest School in 2021, the site was sporadically used by the school and staff. Previously, the site had been used as a Forest School but this had not been maintained. To get ready for Forest School, some land needed to be cleared to install the seating area. This will need to be

maintained by the schools landscaping service. Other than this area, the site is mostly left to its own devices so that the children are able to see what naturally grows there and who lives there.

Long Term Vision:

During the first year of Forest School (2021–2022) the site was used once a week for Forest School sessions and a fire session was completed once a term. In the academic year 2023–2024 we have two additional trained Forest School Leaders, meaning that each class will have a term of Forest School. This will result in the site being used at least 4 afternoons a week. In the academic year 2023–2024 we have continued to offer each year group a term of Forest School and rested the land during school holidays. Looking forward to 2024–2025 we are aiming to make a better use of the red zone of the Forest and build a second fire pit to enable better rotation of the use of land. We will continue to involve the children in growing and maintaining natural habitats on the site.

Impact matrix to assess the ecological effects of Forest School activities.

Activity	Area Impacted On							
	Ground Layer and soil	Field Layer	Shrub Layer	Canopy Layer	Deadwood	Nesting Birds	Pathways	Other Habitats
Fire	X				X	X		X
Den Building	X	X	X		X		X	X
Tool Based Activities	X				X			
Exploring	X	X	X		X	X		X
Journey to the site	X	X						
Environmental art	X	X			X		X	X

