
Responsible body

Title of policy



Governing body

Forest School Handbook

Our Vision

*In God's likeness, we
shine our light in all
we say and do,
through love, respect,
courage and joy.*


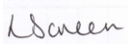
curious, confident, caring



Astley School recognises the importance of nurturing the whole child during their time at Astley School. The offer of a high-quality Forest School experience, for all children, across the seasons, is a key component in this. Our Forest School is set in an inspiring natural landscape, which is used to promote an understanding and appreciation of the wonder of nature. This is in itself a spiritual experience enabling individuals to flourish and experience awe whilst also recognising their responsibility to steward the earth's resources responsibly.

Ratified by the Governing Body: Wednesday 18th September

Date for review: September 2026

Signed by:   Chair of governors Lisa Screen
Head teacher Tracie Langfield

Author

Updated

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Mary Griffiths

Sep 2024

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Appendix 1: Risk Assessments including:



Daily Risk Assessment-checklist, Hot chocolate and biscuit, Cooking on a fire, Shelter building, Site RA, Lighting a fire, Rope swing, rope walks and slack line, Using a storm kettle. Crafts including using scissors.

1. Aims and ethos

Forest School offers pupils the time and space to develop a positive relationship with the natural world. This enables them to appreciate the natural world and develop a responsibility for conservation throughout their life. Forest School at Astley is a child led experience where all can be involved in activities that help to connect them to nature, both individually and as part of our school community. Pupils will have a safe space in which to play, be creative and reflect on their experiences. Forest School at Astley allows children to explore, challenge themselves to move out of their comfort zone if they choose to and encourages love, respect, courage and joy in our shared environment.

Key Principles of Forest School.

- Principle 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.
- Principle 2: 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.
- Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- Principle 5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.
- Principle 6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

2. Communication strategy

Astley School communicates with its stakeholders in a range of ways, at regular intervals. These include Collective Worship, Team Council and class meetings, professional development meetings, training days, Governing Body meetings, school newsletters and parish magazine articles. We always aim to provide clear communication so that all stakeholders understand and are fully invested in the life and purposes of the school.



The stakeholders involved in Astley's Forest School (FS) are the children, their parents, the Forest School Leader (FSL - Mrs Griffiths), the Head teacher (HT - Mrs Langfield), school staff, the governors, neighbours of the school and Forest School volunteers.

All [volunteers](#) will have an induction meeting with FSL and hold a school DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) before starting to volunteer so that they understand the ethos and aims of FS, their role as an assistant, what is acceptable behaviour from a volunteer and what to do if there is an incident.

Expectations of how to safely operate with the FS environment are modelled, narrated and communicated clearly to staff, volunteers and children at the start, finish and during every FS session to ensure that we build a safe, inspiring and purposeful environment which is clearly understood by all.

3. Forest School Health & Safety

a) **General Health & Safety Statement:**

The Governing Body of Astley CE Primary School recognises its responsibility as the employer to ensure the health and safety of its employees and visitors are in compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Regulations published under it. Further details of how these responsibilities are met is found in the school [Health and Safety policy](#) (Jan 19).

The person in charge is always the Forest School Leader, however many adults accompany Forest School sessions. The FSL has overall duty of care for the children but all adults are required to take a proactive role to ensure children are safe. All adult helpers must read this handbook and the accompanying Risk Assessments and sign and date the sheet at the front.

b) **First Aid:**

Who is responsible, what is their training and what kit do they carry.

The FSL, Mrs Griffiths, has been trained in First Aid including Outdoor First Aid and Paediatric First Aid. The FSL will have the first aid kit in a school rucksack including a separate burns kit for every FS session. This includes medical information for all pupil and adults. This will always be placed under the canopy underneath the green cross symbol, so it can be located quickly by any volunteer or participant at any time if necessary. All children and adults will be shown and told about the location of the First Aid bag. The FSL will always carry a mobile phone in case of emergency.

Procedure

Minor incidents

FSL to examine the child and determine what First Aid, if any, is required on site.

The incident will be logged in the First Aid book, stored in the Forest School First Aid



Bag. The incident will be transferred to Arbor by the FSL after the session is over. If applicable, parents will be informed as per school policy.

Major incidents

FSL has a mobile phone to contact the school office. Additional adult help will be requested, either from another FS adult or from staff in the school building. FSL to examine child and first aid applied on site. An ambulance will be called, if required, by an adult on site. One FS adult will call "1,2,3 Forest School" and assemble the remaining children and return them to their classroom and class teacher. Headteacher/Senior Teacher will be informed of the incident via phone call and parents will be informed. The incident will be logged in the FS First Aid Book and on Arbor.

Volunteers will follow the directions of the FSL.

The school postcode is DY13 0RH.

The emergency procedure and information is attached to the First Aid bag.

Please refer to Astley School's First Aid Policy and Health & Safety Policy.

Adult requires First Aid

If an adult requires First Aid during a session the same procedures will be followed for minor and major incidents, as above. A list of medical needs for adults will be accessible at the School Office.

If the fire alarm sounds

The FSL will direct the group to the lower playground to join the rest of their class for the register.

In a Lockdown situation

The FSL will receive directions from senior staff. This may include remaining in Forest School, returning to school or exiting the grounds across the fields. FSL has a mobile phone at all times.

c) Welfare statement:

The welfare of pupils and adults taking part in FS is paramount. Everyone will be encouraged to wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the weather conditions. Staff will have spare clothing available, suitable for the season. There will be hand washing facilities on the FS site. The small group nature of Astley's FS sessions mean



children will be able to speak to an adult easily if they have any concerns. Pupils will be offered a drink and snack at FS sessions.

d) Toileting

All participants will be encouraged to use the toilets in school building before their FS session starts. Children will be able to return to the school building to use toilets during the FS session with a member of staff or in pairs, if it is considered they can do this safely (Year 2 and above). Children must seek permission to leave the FS site and check in as they return so that the FSL knows where everyone is at all times. Hand washing facilities will always be available on the FS site, comprising of 2 washing up bowls, one with warm water (flask) and a cold, rinsing bowl.

e) Daily Operating Procedures

See separate document.

f) Tools used at FS

The FSL will check over all tools regularly, clean and sharpen as needed and remove tools that are not fit for purpose. The FSL will keep tools in a locked tool box on FS site and when sessions are over this box will be kept in the locked FS cupboard. The school is alarmed when no staff are present. Tools can only be used where there are 2 adults present. *See RAs and procedures for tools and fire document for more details (in this folder).*

g) Fire lighting at FS

The FSL is responsible for the FS fire and will ensure that they or a designated adult is supervising the fire at all times. The fire will only be lit within the fire pit area and when the FSL has checked that it is safe to do so, having assessed weather conditions, the ratio of adults to children (at least 2 adults) and the behaviour of the group. Safety equipment will be in place (fire blanket, fire gloves, 20 litres of water including a bucket and watering can). The fire will always be put out at the end of the session using water so that the area is safe. *See Fire RA and procedures for tools and fire document for more details (in this folder).*

h) Campfire cooking and food hygiene procedure

- The FSL will hold the dietary requirements and allergy information for every group within the first aid rucksack.



- The FSL will prepare Hot Chocolate before sessions in the school kitchen using a flask.
- Children will be offered hot chocolate (or a drink of water) and a biscuit at each session. Children will be warned that the drink is hot and adults will check temperature before giving to children. Drinks will be poured into clean cups on a table covered with a wipe clean cloth. (*see Hot choc and biscuit RA for more details*).
- Hand washing facilities will be available at every FS session including water and hand soap. Children must wash hands when returning to school building after the session.
- The FSL will buy any food needed for cooking at FS sessions. These will be stored in the fridge in the school kitchen. Food will be protected from contamination and all utensils and plates, chopping boards and other equipment used will be washed up straight after the FS session in hot soapy water. Any leftover food will be disposed of in the school kitchen bin (*see cooking RA for more details*).
- The FSL will hold Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate.

i) Cancellation Procedure

A FS session will be cancelled if the FSL assesses it to be too windy (a guide is above Force 7 on the Beaufort Scale: moderate gale, 32-35 mph, whole trees in motion). The FSL must monitor the weather before and during a session and assess age and condition of trees, time of year and whether there are any loose or damaged branches in the FS area. The FS session will also be cancelled if the FSL assesses the temperature to be too low and the weather too icy and/or snowy for children to take part in their session safely. The FS session will be cancelled in the event of thunder and lightning and participants will return to the school buildings, if this happens during a session. A session can be cancelled if the weather is too hot.

If FS is cancelled prior to a session beginning, pupils will remain in their usual classroom with their class teacher and the FSL will ask the Office Manager to inform volunteers by telephone.

j) Transport to and from the site

Children will walk from school to the FS site and back, taking care when crossing the footpath between the playground and the field.

k) COSHH

The COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) register is kept in the School Office and the FSL will ensure that any relevant items are used safely in line with the safety data sheets and risk assessments.



4. Risk Benefit Assessments

The Risk Assessments are included at Appendix 1 of this handbook and are shared with all staff and volunteers prior to working in FS.

5. Safeguarding Children at Forest School

a) **Staff roles and responsibilities**

The FSL has responsibility for the safety of all children and adults at a FS session following the [Safeguarding policy](#). The FSL will make all participants aware of the RAs and rules of the site. All adults will ensure children are following the FS rules and are safe at all times. [Volunteers](#) will ask staff questions and refer areas of concern to the FSL. All adults hold a DBS check.

b) **Lost or missing child procedure**

In case of a missing child, the FSL will inform the HT or office via mobile to enable them to search the school. The FSL will conduct an immediate search of the grounds and the [Absconding policy](#) will be implemented if appropriate.

c) **Safeguarding**

The Head Teacher is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Mrs Wilcox and Miss Creig are the Deputy DSLs. All staff have annual safeguarding training and volunteers receive appropriate safeguarding training as part of the induction meeting.

d) **Disclosure**

All disclosures, concerns or observations must be reported via CPOMs as soon as is practicable. This may include a staff member leaving the session to make an urgent report. All observations should be reported on CPOMs by the end of the school day.

e) **Confidentiality procedure**

Class lists will be held in the first aid rucksack. The Office Manager will update these. The FSL will ensure this is secure within the school building when Forest School sessions finish.

f) **Complaints procedure**

The school [Complaints Policy](#) enables anyone with a concern to appropriately raise this.

g) **Insurance**

The school holds an up-to-date public liability insurance:

Policy provider: Maven Public Sector

Policy number: P20CASLFG00048

h) **Use of photos and social media**



Staff, volunteers and children may take photos of children in FS sessions using school equipment (camera or iPad). These can be used in school to showcase learning by staff. They may be used in school publications by senior staff. Reference must always be made to the consents given by parents to ensure no child's image is used without parental consent. Staff, volunteers and children are not authorised to take images on personal equipment without permission from the HT.

6. Equality within Forest School

Our [Equality policy](#) describes our commitment to equality and access for all. These principles will be upheld in FS, as in all other areas of school life, with staff making every reasonable adjustment to ensure all pupils fully experience FS.

7. Environmental Policy

See Environmental Management Plan.

8. Behaviour policy and procedure

FS encourages an atmosphere of community, working together, caring for each other and reflecting on personal development. There will be an emphasis on self-regulation, encouragement and confidence building at FS. As FS is child led and involves choice, pupils can follow their own interests and likes. This emphasis leads to a positive behaviour on site. All behaviour management will be in line with our [Values and Vision](#) and [Behaviour policy](#). The FSL will remind pupils of the appropriate behaviour and rules to keep everyone safe at FS at the start of each session and repeat as necessary.

The FSL will encourage school staff and volunteers to observe pupils and allow them to play, rather than getting involved too quickly in their activities. It is a valuable opportunity for pupils to practice a wide range of social skills and for children who can find it hard to settle in a classroom environment to be more relaxed.

FSL will deal with incidents of challenging behaviour in the first instance through implementing the Behaviour policy. If a pupil's behaviour becomes unsafe at FS then the pupil will be returned to their classroom and class teacher by the FSL. The FSL will follow up on this before the next session with that pupil. In case of a serious behaviour incident, the FSL will telephone for support from Head Teacher or Senior Teacher.

9. Unauthorised visitor procedure

Responsible body**Title of policy**

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Astley School has entrance gates that are closed during the day, with access controlled from School Reception. It is possible that unauthorised visitors could access the site from the public footpath between the playground and school field. The FSL will keep all gates closed. In the unlikely event of an unauthorised visitor, a staff member will meet and advise them to return to the public footpath. If needed FS staff will contact the Headteacher or Office Manager by mobile phone for further support.

10. Training for FS volunteers

The FSL will explain the ethos and aims of FS to volunteers at the induction meeting as well as informally throughout the sessions. This will include an explanation of how child led, play based FS sessions are different to the classroom environment or a more traditional outdoor learning experience. It is important that volunteers know that children have a choice in what activities they take part in and that the staff and volunteer role is to observe and ensure children are safe. The FS experience for children is richest when they can play, create and reflect in their chosen ways, with minimal, but skilful, direction from adults.

Author**Updated****Page**

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