

GREAT OAK ADVENTURES

FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK



What is Forest School?

'Forest School 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 with trees'. *(Forest School Association)*

Rationale

At Great Oak adventures we believe that everyone should have a chance to learn and experience woodland adventures. We encourage participants of all ages and experience. We aim to encourage learners to try new things, make new friends and develop confidence and understanding in an outdoor environment. Participants make the decisions on what they would like to do at each session and this is a no pressure environment.

Our team

Forest school leader - Anna Sargent

Forest School leader - Alastair Halford- MacLeod

Support - Jo Bath

Support - Kate Jones

All staff and volunteers are DBS checked and have received in house safeguarding training. The team are there as support for the group, to inspire, mentor, observe and take responsibility.

Team member will promote outdoor learning

There will be one team member with first aid always present.

Code of conduct

Be kind to yourself

Be kind to others

Be kind to the environment

Forest school routines

Before sessions

- Check the forecast and any weather warnings to ensure session is safe to go ahead.
- Complete risk assessment
- Check all equipment for signs of wear
- Make sure all participants emergency contact details are correct and easy to access.
- Make sure everyone has the correct clothing for the activity/weather.
- Make sure phones and radios are charged
- Pack spare food and clothing.
- Check contact details and who is picking up.
- Check medical info and allergies and get any medication from parents

During session

- Briefing of the session including rituals and safety awareness
- Regular head counts
- Regular risk assessments as the elements and activities change

- Have fun, feel creative, feel inspired.
- Reflect on the session and how the next session should go

Post session

- Count all equipment back in, clean and store safely
- Make sure that you take only photos and leave only footprints so there is no damage to the site
- Team evaluation to plan the next session

Risk assessment

There are constant risk assessments being carried out, however not every bit of danger will be removed and participants are taught to self risk assess so they learn to independently risk assess all aspects of daily life.

Daily assessments- Every day we will carry out a risk assessment before the session and throughout.

Activity assessment- every activity carried out will have its own risk assessment.

Site assessments- Seasonal site assessments are carried out every quarter to check the site for invasive species, check plant growth and damage, assess tree health with an expert and evaluate the ecological impact plan.

Risk Benefit Analysis

Location:						Name: Anna Sargent			
		Description of site activity: Woodland Play activities, den building,							
Hazard	Harm	Who is at risk	Controls	P r o b a b i l i t y 1 - 5	S e v e r i t y 1 - 5	Risk	Responsibility	Benefits	
General Play on the site	Bruises and grazes from trips or falls, eye level branches	Everyone	Safety briefings Site management – removal of eye level branches Staff observations Making sure correct footwear is worn	3	2	Low	Forest School Leader – ongoing risk assess	Respecting nature Learn about nature through hands on activities Health and wellbeing from being outdoors	
Nettles and brambles	Stings and scratches	Everyone	Making participants aware of their surrounds and not to touch nettles or brambles without safety equipment (gloves) reinforce the need for correct clothing . Children encouraged to avoid areas with high density of nettles and brambles.	4	1	Low			

Bees and wasps	Stings	Everyone	Teaching children how to behave around bees and wasps to reduce the likelihood of being stung	1	2			Learning to respect nature and not be afraid of it.
Ropes and swings	Possible rope burns Bumps, bruises, falls	The children using the equipment	Only rope swings constructed by staff to be used – thus ensuring safety. Remove swing at the end of each session. Site inspection on arrival to ensure a suitable tree branch is used. Rope is checked for fraying or damage before each use. Bright coloured tape attached to horizontal ropes to make them visible. Make sure you have the correct rope that functions for each job.	3	2	Low	FS Leader	Physical strength and coordination. Overcoming fears
Slack line	Rope burns, slips, falls.	The children using the equipment	Only 2 at a time allowed to use the equipment, regular checks to ensure the equipment is safe.	3	2	low	FS leader	Physical strength and coordination. Overcoming fears
Blindfold Games	Bumps, trips, falls, head injuries, cuts, bruises, disorientation on grazes, panic	The child who is blindfolded	Safety instructions will be given to the group prior to the activity. Always monitored by an adult.	2	2	Low	FS Leader	Overcoming fears,
Collecting Natural Materials	Lifting injuries, strains, slips, trips, falls, poisoning, cuts, grazes, thorns, splinters, stings,	The child/children that are collecting	Safety instructions given prior to the activity. Children shown how to lift safely Children supervised throughout the activity with an adult present/nearby Site regularly inspected for knowledge of poisonous plants.	3	2	Low	FS Leader	Gaining knowledge and confidence in the local woodland Physical strength Hands on learning about nature Health and wellbeing from being outdoors
Climbing trees or on structures at site (being “off the ground”)	Slips, trips, bumps, falls, impact, head injuries, strains, entanglement	The children that are climbing on a structure	Weather check in line with weather risk assessment below. Safety check of structure to be used for climbing – ensure it is not wet and slippery and is not rotten. All climbing activities to be closely supervised Safe climbing to be demonstrated or guided Rest periods Visual assessment for any animal life Participants will not climb wearing loose clothing, or articles that could become entangled in the branches	2	5	Medium	FS Leader	Confidence Physical strength and ability Personal, social and emotional development
Tools	Cuts, bruises and wounds	Person using the tool and those close by	Ensure all users are aware of the “tool safety briefing” and know about the blood bubble no glove to be worn on the hand using the tool but glove worn on the other hand tools to be counted in and out each session one to one supervision initially used in designated blood bubble only a reminder to other FS children to stay clear of tools	3	5	Medium		New skills, hand eye coordination, confidence.
Den building	Being hit by sticks or stones. Cuts, bruises. Head/eye injury	Those involved in den building or close by.	Dens will only be built on ground level using natural materials found on site. Site inspection on arrival to check for any new hazards. Make sure branches overhang support post so they don't slip, check support post for stability.	5	1	Low	Forest School Leader	Working collaboratively/teamwork. Developing physical strength and coordination. Critical thinking and creativity – problem

			Avoid Teepee style dens.					solving skills. Some sense of achievement – intrinsically motivated.
Weather Cold weather such as Snow or Low temperatures	Ice – slips and falls Snow – slips and falls, being hit by snowballs Low temperatures – children being too cold/hypothermic	Children and adults not dressed sufficiently for the weather	Ensure everyone attending Forest School is wearing appropriate clothing . Send parents reminders prior to session and check weather forecast regularly. Site inspection on arrival. Decision whether to proceed with FS if snow is very heavy to be made on the day.	3	2	Low	Forest School leader	Understanding the properties of Ice. Learning about weather Physical development - Building with snow Fun and enjoyment
Rain	Getting wet and cold Flooding of site (unlikely)	Children or adults not dressed sufficiently for the weather	Ensure everyone is dressed for the weather. Keep up to date with weather forecasts. Have spare clothes if needed. Keep tarps handy to protect from heavy rain.	2	1	Low		Splashing in puddles Physical development Understanding changes in weather.
Sunshine -	Sun stroke Exhaustion Thirst sunburn	Ensure children wear sunscreen, sun hats and bring water bottles	Focus play in a shaded part of the woodland which will keep temperatures down. Keep up to date with weather forecasts Daily risk assessment to ensure Children are dressed for the weather	3	3	Medium		Spending time in outdoor environment rather than indoors. All the above benefits of play outdoors.
Fire and heat	Burning of skin and clothes Smoke inhalation Irritation to eyes and throat	Children around the fire pit	Weather always assessed before starting fire. Children will be given a safety brief before entering the fire pit area. Must be invited into the fire circle When at the fire everyone to adopt the respect position - on one knee to remain stable. Maximum of 4 people at fire (incl. adults). Fire is supervised at all times while alight or hot embers remain, to ensure children do not have unsupervised access. Children will be given rules and safety advice and dangers of fire prior to visiting the fire. All staff attending FS are Paediatric First Aid Trained and FS Leader is FS First Aid Trained. first aid box will be available. Fire proof gloves within easy reach. Fire area will be away from buildings. The fire will not be under overhanging trees which may catch alight. A good supply of water will be available to put out flames and dampen heat. A fire blanket will be available. Embers will be dampened off with water and cooled and spread around with a spade The position of the fire will be away from buildings and wind direction will be constantly assessed. Children advised to move safely out of smoke direction. Dry suitable wood used to prevent excess smoke.	3	5	Medium		Learning about cooking, enjoying marshmallows, Learning to light fire with sense of achievement. Learning safety and respect for fire.
River	Falling in, getting cold and wet, drowning	Children and staff	Children monitored at all times and only allowed near the river at set times with a grown up for river play. Mentioned at	3	5	Medium	All staff	Learning about floating and sinking, how water flows and changes over the years, source of

			every briefing and at lunch break. Anyone unsafe asked to leave					water for putting out the fire.
Rockpooling	Slipping on the rocks, cutting fingers on barnacles, nipped by crab, falling in the water. Strain from lifting heavy rock	Children and staff	Briefing before sessions to explain danger on rocks and how to correctly lift rocks and pick up animals. Told which area we will be in and asking all participants to stay near by.	3	4	Medium	All staff and parents	Learning about a new environment
Beach Play	Sand in eyes, trip on rocks, glass or litter on beach.	Children and staff	Briefing and litter pick of area	2	2	Low	All staff	Learning new textures having fun.

Toileting

There are toilets available at the school or in the toilet tent that we encourage participants to use at the beginning and end of sessions to avoid them missing out or having to leave the group. If anyone needs the toilet during the session they must notify staff for safety, numbers and children will be accompanied by a member of staff if necessary.

Behaviour

The forest school rituals of be kind to yourself, be kind to others and be kind to the environment is very important. Great Oak Adventures is a place people should feel respected, safe and valued. Rituals are done before every session to remind the group of appropriate behavior. Positive reinforcement is used to encourage positive behavior in the group. If a learner is not being safe they will ask to stop the activity they are doing. Volunteers should bring any behavioural issues to the forest school leader. It is the groups responsibly to care for the site and its surroundings and show respect to the area and members of the public.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding officer – Anna Sargent

Great Oak Adventures team are all trained in current safeguarding and our policy can be read at any time, anyone working with the group will have DBS checks. All records kept on file are password protected and only on a need to know basis.

It is important that any information that is shared during forest school sessions that is of concern must be addressed. The information will be shared with the safeguarding officer and if necessary addressed with local authorities.

It is important if a child makes a disclosure to follow the following steps:

1. Listen to what they are saying
2. Make a note of what has been said
3. Take all discussions seriously
4. Provide reassurance but don't agree to keeping a secret
5. Speak to the safeguarding officer.

Parents are asked to complete consent forms for photography. We like to take photos of our sessions to share with parents and if allowed on social media to show others the amazing fun we have.

We take bullying very seriously and will always listen and try our best to resolve any issues within the group.

Missing/ Lost Child

All sessions start with rituals and a safety briefing. The boundaries are explained to the group and the Great Oaks team are responsible for headcounts. For older groups 1,2,3 where are you will explained and used throughout the session. If a group member goes missing the following steps will take place:

1. As a whole group go back to where you were to look calling the missing persons name along the way.
2. Back up team members will then be called to take the group indoors
3. Remaining staff will continue searching for a maximum 10mins.
4. Police and parents will then be called after this point.

Health and Safety Policy

The health and safety of the team and all participants is a top priority for Great Oak Adventures. We carry out our risk assessments daily and keep up to date with all government updates.

The group leader is in charge of all participants health and safety throughout the day. They will always carry a phone, first aid kit and an emergency bag with contact details for each child and some essential survival equipment.

When working with tools the staff member will work with a very small group or one to one if it is their first time trying a new tool.

Hygiene Procedures

All staff that are handling food are trained in hygiene procedures and at least one member of the team has a level 2 food hygiene certificate.

All hands are washed or sanitizer is used before preparing food and after using the toilet.

All food is stored in an airtight container and stored at the correct temperature until it is taken to the site. The site is always left as it is found with no food or rubbish left behind.

Environment Policy

Our aim is to keep the environment around us as natural as possible with as little impact as possible.

When climbing trees we take care not to damage the trees and we don't use the same trees daily to climb. We protect areas that have flower growth and try to use the same paths around camp to create minimal damage. Camp fires are always cleaned up after use so there is no evidence there was even a fire there. We collect wood for the fire from various different areas so we are not removing deadwood from the same site regularly. All toileting

is done at the school to avoid contamination the ground. Food waste is collected straight after use.

Tool safety Policy

Tools are a great way to provide new skills and confidence in group members as well as giving them something to be proud of. It is important safety measures are followed to keep the tool users and the rest of the group safe.

1. Create a safety circle away from the main group, make sure the whole group understands tools will be used in this area.
2. Keep tools in a locked container and get them out for use with participants, put away straight after use and never leave the group with free access to the tools.
3. Judge the group and only use if you feel the participant is mature enough to understand the dangerous implications of tool use. Be aware that moods change and just because a child was calm enough to use a tool yesterday it doesn't mean they are today. Always evaluate.
4. First use of any tool must be 1:1 with a group leader until the leader feels confident they can use the tool safely.
5. Safety gloves must always be worn on the non tool hand. Gloves should not be worn on the hand using a tool.
6. Tools are regularly maintained and checked to ensure they are sharp and safe.
7. All tools are counted back in at the end of the session and locked away

Fire safety Policy

Fires are a great addition to a day in forest school they can be used to cook lunch, have a snack or just a place to warm up and share stories. We take fire safety very seriously at Great Oak Adventures.

We have permission from the land owner to create the fires here and we have made sure the area is clear of low hanging branches, trip hazards and tree roots.

Some key points to keep our fire safe

- The group are made aware that a fire will soon be lit before we even start the fire.
- Fires are only lit when the whole group understands the fire safety rules.
- No one can enter the fire circle unless invited
- When near the fire participant should use the respect position.
- Long sleeve tops and trousers should be worn at all times
- If the smoke is blowing at a seated area then the seats can be moved with care to not get too close to the fire
- We never have a fire if the weather is windy or gusty
- The fire circle is cleared of leaves
- Whoever is in charge of the fire must not leave the fire circle until the fire is out
- Safety equipment must be kept close by and include a first aid kit, clean water in case of a burn, water to put the fire out, fire gloves and tongs.
- Minimal wood should be used so the fire is burnt up and no half burnt sticks are left.
- Fires should be put out with water and also the ground should be dug up to allow water to cool the earth below.
- Make sure all participants know that although the fire is out the fire circle should still be avoided
- Before leaving site always check the fire has not re lit.

Communication strategy

Groups to communicate with	Information required	When to pass on info	Format
Participants	Kit list, FS agreement, staff info, session plans, what the group will get out of sessions	Before they start and before every session	Paper documents or weblinks
Parents	Kit list, parents policy, staff info, dates, health and safety, any medical info, social media policy, consent forms,	Before starting at the FS and regular updates before each session	Initial email. Follow up Whats App messages.
Local residents	Risk assessments and health and safety, forest school information	Regular before you start business and throughout	Initial letter drop followed by Notice board
Council (land Owners)	Full risk assessments and all paperwork required	Before opening and regular updates	Emails
Staff/ Volunteers	Risk assessment, regular business updates, policy updates, info regarding children	Every day in morning briefing	Emails and verbal

Cancellation Policy

For holiday club payment must be made at the time of booking. Payments can be refunded if notice is given 1 week before the session is due to start.

Complaints Procedure

We aim to have happy participants that have had an amazing session. However if you have a complaint please do let us know and will do our best to rectify the problem. If you have a problem with one of the team members please contact Anna directly if you would like to complain about Anna you can speak to a different team member. If you are not happy your issue has been resolved you can take it further with external regulators such as Ofqual or SQA.

Contact us at any time

Facebook- Great Oak Adventures

Email- Greatoakadventures@gmail.com

Website – www.greatoakadventures.co.uk