

Belmont Forest School Handbook 2026/2027



Forest School is an amazing spiritual experience, which takes you into the deepest parts of your imagination, leaving you feeling uplifted, enlightened, challenged and content. (P. Dobbs 2015)

Welcome to Belmont Forest School

At Belmont Forest School we believe every child deserves the opportunity to succeed through hands-on learning, exploration and adventure.

Forest School provides opportunities to:

- Build confidence
- Develop resilience
- Improve wellbeing
- Learn practical skills
- Respect nature
- Become independent learners
- Work together as a team

Our sessions follow the Forest School principles, while supporting the individual needs of our pupils.



Forest School Ethos and Principles

Forest School is a healthy way of learning in a natural setting. Forest School promotes success and achievement through personalised learning in an inclusive outdoor classroom.

It offers opportunities for individuals to flourish and for their true potential to shine through with a focus on well-being, emotional development, social interaction and practical skills.

It promotes success and achievement through child-led learning in a natural environment where all children can succeed.

Forest School helps children to identify their strengths by exploring their talents. Immersion in nature has proven to reduce stress levels and boost the immune system.

Forest School is led by a trained Forest School level 3 Practitioner who is committed to delivering a high-quality programme, putting into practise their knowledge of pedagogy, education and practical skills.

To ensure best practise we follow the Forest School principles:

FS offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks.

FS aims to promote the holistic development.

FS is learner led.

FS takes place in a woodland or natural environment.

FS aims to promote the holistic development.

FS is run by qualified Forest School practitioners.



**Belmont
School**

Belmont School Values in Forest School

Ready

Being prepared to learn.

Examples

- Wearing suitable clothing
- Listening carefully
- Bringing a positive attitude
- Looking after equipment

Respectful

We show respect by:

- Respecting ourselves
- Respecting others
- Respecting wildlife
- Respecting the environment
- Respecting equipment

Safe

We stay safe by:

- Following instructions
- Using tools correctly
- Respecting fire
- Looking after one another
- Making sensible choices

Belmont Forest School Leader



About Me

Hello, I'm **Patricia Dobbs**, Forest School Lead at Belmont School.

I am a level 3 qualified and have been delivering Forest School sessions since 2015.

Forest School is something I am deeply passionate about because it brings together so many of the things I value in education. I love being outdoors and seeing children connect with nature, explore their environment, and discover things for themselves. There is something truly special about learning outside, where every season brings new experiences, opportunities, and adventures.



One of the things I love most about Forest School is that it is **inclusive for everyone**. Every child can participate, succeed, and find their own way to engage, regardless of their strengths, needs, or learning style. Forest School celebrates individuality and provides a nurturing environment where children can build confidence, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

I am also passionate about the positive impact Forest School can have on **emotional wellbeing and self-regulation**. The freedom of the outdoor environment, combined with sensory experiences and opportunities for supported risk-taking, can help children feel calm, focused, and connected. I love seeing children develop the skills to manage their emotions, build positive relationships, and grow in confidence through their experiences outdoors.

Above all, I love the **magic** that Forest School creates. Whether it is a child spotting wildlife for the first time, proudly lighting a fire, creating imaginative worlds from natural materials, or simply finding joy in a muddy puddle, Forest School provides unforgettable moments of wonder. Watching children develop curiosity, independence, and a lifelong appreciation of the natural world is what makes Forest School so special to me.



Belmont
School

Belmont Forest School Site

We have an ever-evolving Forest School area, which we add to or change every year.







Belmont Forest School Rules

Our Forest School Rules

1. Listen for the Whistle



When an adult gives the Forest School signal (whistle), stop, look and listen.

2. Respect Nature



We look after plants, trees, insects and wildlife.

- Be gentle with living things.
 - Leave habitats as we find them.
 - Take only memories and photographs.
-

3. Stay Within the Boundaries



Always stay where an adult can see you.

- Know where the boundary markers are.
 - Stop if you are unsure where to go.
-

4. Walking Feet



Walk around the Forest School site.

Running can cause accidents on uneven ground.

5. Use Tools Safely



- Use tools only when an adult says so.
 - Carry tools safely.
 - Keep a safe distance from others.
-

6. Keep Hands and Feet to Yourself



Be kind, respectful and inclusive.

- Help others.
 - Use kind words.
 - Everyone belongs at Forest School.
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7. Look After Yourself



- Wear suitable clothing.
 - Tell an adult if you feel unwell.
 - Drink water when needed.
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8. Fire Circle Safety



- Walk around the outside of the fire circle.
 - Stay seated unless given permission.
 - Follow adult/ Forest School Leader instructions at all times.
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Off-Site Forest School Rules

9. Stay with the Group



Always stay with your group and adult leader.

"Together we are safe."

10. Walk Sensibly Near Roads



- Walk calmly.
 - Stop at crossings.
 - Listen carefully to adults.
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11. Respect the Community



- Use quiet voices.
 - Be polite.
 - Respect other people, animals and property.
-

12. Leave No Trace



Take all litter home/ back to school or put it in a bin.

Help keep our outdoor spaces beautiful for everyone.

★ Our Forest School Promise

"We will be safe, respectful, kind and curious as we explore, learn and enjoy the outdoors"

What to wear for Forest School

What Should I Wear to Forest School?

Come Dressed for Adventure!

We have waterproof clothing in school for those that need it, but pupils can also bring their own if they wish to.

At Forest School we learn in all weathers, so it is important to wear clothes that keep you comfortable, warm and safe.

Long-Sleeved Top

Protects arms from scratches, stings and insect bites.

Long Trousers

Helps protect legs from nettles, brambles and ticks.

Waterproof Coat

Keeps you dry when it rains and protects from wind.

Waterproof Trousers

Ideal for muddy activities and wet weather.

Wellies or Sturdy Outdoor Boots

Perfect for muddy ground, puddles and uneven surfaces.

Warm Socks

Keeps feet warm and comfortable.

Gloves (Cold Weather)

Helps keep hands warm during winter sessions.

Hat and Scarf (Cold Weather)

Essential for keeping warm on chilly days.

Sun Hat (Warm Weather)

Protects your head and face from the sun.

Sunscreen (Applied Before School)

Helps protect skin during sunny weather.

Water Bottle

Staying hydrated is important when outdoors.

Please Do Not Wear

-  Shorts
 -  Sandals or open-toe shoes
 -  Flip-flops
 -  Clothing that you don't mind getting muddy
 -  Jewellery that could catch on branches
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**Belmont
School**

Belmont Forest School Site Risk Assessment

Belmont Primary Forest School Risk Assessment			
Description of Activity	Forest School activities (building, climbing, exploring the natural environment) Natural play and use of fires.	Purpose / objectives of Forest School Learning.	To allow children to access a Forest School programme as part of their learning and development.
Venue:	Belmont Primary School, Peel Street, Cloughfold, Rossendale, Lancashire, BB4 7LJ		
People involved			
Employees and providers		Staff and pupils attending activity ages 5-adult	
Group leader	Patricia Dobbs	Various – changes every session	
Other staff	Pupil support workers		
Base contact	Christine Foster		
Risks posed and the controls to be taken			
Aspects to consider	Foreseeable risks	Who is at risk?	Control measures
1. Type of group Boys aged 5-11 with SEMH diagnosis	Physical interventions or stress from new environment.	Pupils and staff	Staff to be vigilant to changes in children's behaviours and follow PRA's if in use for individuals to manage behaviours. Appropriate staff/pupil ratios. Radios accessible throughout sessions to gain assistance if needed. If physical intervention is used, remove the pupil from the area wherever possible, ensuring that staffing ratios are still in place (use radios if needed)
2. Staffing	Staff absence	Pupils and staff	Sessions will not go ahead if staffing absences are not able to be covered.

	Staffing ratios	Pupils and staff	No lone working. Appropriate staff/pupil ratios
3. Equipment	Incorrect/misuse of tools i.e., saws, secateurs and loppers, spades, bill hooks, traditional hand drills, palm drill, sheaf knives, bradawl, low power drill/screwdriver, hammers and nails etc. Injuries could include abrasions, cuts, laceration, and impact injuries & puncture wounds. Cuts and stabbing injuries from mishandling of scissors, traditional hand drills, palm drills, bradawl, low power drill/screwdriver, secateurs and small knives.	Pupils and staff Pupils	Tool talks on correct use of tools (before any use of tools). Ensure tools are stored correctly when not in use (in designated tool area, locked when not in use). Keep safe working distances from each other, covered in tool talks. Designated tool area will be assigned on the day by the leader. If tools are misused in any way, then they will be removed from the pupil and tool bans may be used depending upon the severity, these will differ based on each individual incident, forest school leaders will undertake a dynamic risk assessment to support this. First Aid kit and First Aider on site. Forest School leader to brief pupils on the safe handling and use of tool, Staff to monitor use of tools by children and stop if necessary. Only allow use of knives on a one-one basis until children demonstrate extremely good knowledge of safe use. - Whittling wood taking blade away from hand holding the wood and away from the body. Initially working hand over hand. Leader to demonstrate correct tool use. Remind children of safe

	Damaged equipment. Injuries from poor maintenance of tools, cuts, scrapes, bruises.		distancing when using a knife. Use of PPE (glove on helping hand unless the child has an aversion due to their sensory needs. In this case the child will be supervised more closely). No glove to be used on helping hand whilst using traditional hand drill, this ensures a safer and better grip on handle. First Aid kit and First Aider on site. All forest school equipment to be checked regularly by forest school leaders (brief check before each session of equipment due to be used and at the end of each session before being stored.)
4. Risks from the activity / venue	Collecting natural materials and construction activities. Slips, trips and falls around site (woods & path in), causing impact injury, sprains, bruising etc Children absconding due to gaps in the fencing and a low wall. Children climbing up the tree that over	Pupils and staff Pupils	Correct footwear to be worn. Area checked before session for hazards. Participants warned of hazards of guy ropes from tarps or pegs. First Aid kit and First Aider on site. Phil has had a higher fence built around the low wall. Metal meshing has been placed over the gaps in the fence and concreted down. Forest School area now has a solid high

	hangs the spiky railings Temporarily – the tarp slide has been removed until a new one, with permanent fixings is laid. Igniting the fire. Preparation and building causing burns to fingers/arms, singeing to hair. Building and cooking over open fire causing burns to extremities and body-, first-, second- and third-degree burns.	wooden fence covering the west perimeter. (14.09.24) The tree has been lopped so the branches are not accessible to climb. Forest School area has a solid wooden fence covering the west perimeter (14.09.24) Fire to be lit at arm's length using Ferro rods/ Flint and Steel only. Leader to ensure person igniting the fire is fully aware of the fire safety rules. Fire-craft training covered extensively with technique maximising safety. Leader to manage fire. Any misuse of fire to be dealt with immediately (child/children to leave forest school site immediately, RPI to be used if necessary). Check weather for extreme gusts and postpone if necessary. Fire kept to a small size inside assigned area. Water to extinguish fire completely on site. Burns kit, First Aid kit and First Aider on site. Respectful position to be used when toasting/cooking on the fire. Leader to
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	Setting surrounding ground and vegetation areas alight. Burns	remove all items from the fire area. All group must be seated when passed any hot item. Group to be made aware of safety procedures around the fire. Leader to wear fire safety gloves when cooking. Water to extinguish fire completely on site. Burns kit, First Aid kit and First Aider on site.
	Putting out fire. Burns.	Firepit is situated in a safe area. Area around firepit checked daily for vegetation. Burning sticks not to be removed from firepit. Water is available to sufficiently deal with any accidents. Fire to be fully extinguished before leaving site. Radio at hand for emergencies. Burns kit, First Aid kit and First Aider on site.
	Handling wood which may contain spores, bacteria, animal faeces etc causing infection, stomach complaint, general illness	Ensure fire is fully out and temperature of area has reduced before leaving area. Use water to extinguish fire. Ensure group understand the dangers of extinguishing a fire as there will be steam if extinguished with water. Leave no trace, cooled ash

	Bee/wasp sting, insect bite causing reaction, allergies, anaphylactic shock, discomfort etc Adverse or severe weather conditions i.e., sunburn, poor ground conditions, rain or wind chill could cause sunstroke, hyper/hypothermia & slips trips and falls which could include sprains, strains, fractures, cuts, impact injuries and puncture wounds. Blindfold activities. Scrapes, bumps, falls, knocks etc	raked to minimise environmental disturbance. Water to extinguish fire completely on site. Burns kit, First Aid kit and First Aider on site. Participants encouraged to wash hands after handling wood and to be mindful of picking up contaminated wood and debris. First Aid kit and First Aider on site. Staff to check in advance of sessions if any participants have allergies to insect stings/bites and ensure participants have appropriate medication epi-pen/oointments etc, if needed. (staff present with Epi-pen training where needed) Insect repellent to be provided by parents if they choose (consent form sent before accessing sessions). First Aid kit and First Aider on site. Leader to ensure participants are suitably clothed. Parents and carers advised via consent form to supply appropriate clothing for their children. Leader to complete a Dynamic Risk
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	Eye injuries, puncture wounds, cuts Tree climbing, equipment climbing (e.g. Pirate Ship) and use of swings and surrounding area Loose Dog/Animal on grounds, bites, disease, distress, injury, phobia Standing water, disease		Assessment. Ensure appropriate sun cream is available. If poor conditions persist it may be necessary to come off site for safety reasons also the good of others and seek alternative activities. First Aid kit and First Aider on site. Participants asked to take care prior to activity. Any blindfolded activities should be appropriately supervised by a responsible adult. Leaders to explain how to put the blindfold on carefully. Leaders to give option for group to opt out of wearing blindfold. First Aid kit and First Aider on site. . Participants to be aware of dangers/risks at all levels of the forest and be aware of peer care when moving through the woods together. First Aid kit and First Aider on site.
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	Tarp Sliding. Friction burns, stumble/trips, hypothermia, dehydration, bumps and bruises, soap getting into eyes, noses. As above, tarp slide is temporarily removed until fixed into the ground		Forest school leader to oversee tree climbing, equipment climbing and the building of tree swing, checking to ensure the safety of swing and the correct use of knots etc. Participants to manage own risks, overseen by staff who will intervene when they feel necessary. Equipment used to build will be checked regularly (before each session) by forest school leader. Pirate Ship top level cannot be stood on, only sat upon. Staff to supervise this closely at all times. First Aid kit and First Aider on site. Supervision ratios maintained. Wash/wipe hands if contact is made. Move participants away from area until area is safe. First Aid kit and First Aider on site.
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			Standing water to be removed on daily site check. Group informed of dangers of disease from stagnant and standing water. Leader to check Tarp Slide area before session Leader to ensure staff ratio is correct Leader to ensure inappropriate behaviour is dealt with immediately Liquid soap to be used by staff only and out of reach of pupils Only one child at a time on tarp – temporarily out of use due to new fixings being required. First Aid Kit on and First Aider on site
4. Approval			
	Name	Signature	Date
Group Leader	Patricia Dobbs	P. Dobbs	04.07.26
Ed Visits Coordinator	Craig Bailey/ Patricia Dobbs/ Danielle Jones/Danielle Clark		
Head Teacher	Nicola Haworth		
Ed Visits Advisor	Justine Sims		
Comments / notes			



**Belmont
School**

Belmont Forest School Pupil Passport

Pupils can earn bronze, silver and gold certificates in 11 key areas of Forest School.

If pupils reach gold certification, they are also awarded a wooden medallion for that achievement.

Full details of our Forest School Pupil Passport are on our website.





**Belmont
School**

Belmont Forest School Pupil Voice

At the end of each session there is opportunity for pupils and staff to reflect on what they did/ did not enjoy.

Each team has a floor book with a Forest School plan and photo evidence for each session.

There are speech bubbles for pupil voice on every plan. These can be written with or without staff support.

Speech bubbles are another opportunity for staff to give feedback too, which can be beneficial for pre-verbal or non-verbal pupils.

Safeguarding in Forest School

Safeguarding

It is the responsibility of the Forest Schools teacher and staff to ensure the safety of all pupils. We are committed to creating an environment which is safe from abuse and any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately dealt with.

The Forest Schools Safeguarding Policy focuses on:

- Minimising the risk of abuse taking place through good planning and best practice
- Empowering those it works with to stay safe and speak out
- Taking appropriate action when any allegations arise

Staff & Assistants

All staff will have enhanced checks from the Disclosure & Barring Service, dated within 5 years and at the current home address. All volunteers and visitors will be vetted by gathering references / employment history / record of qualification / or because we will have had prior personal knowledge of the person. If the visitor has a DBS certificate relevant to working with children.

Ratios

The following minimum adult ratios will ensure appropriate support and supervision of vulnerable groups at all times:

Key Stage 1: 3 adults to 8 pupils

Key Stage 2: 3 adults to 8 pupils

These ratios are for guidance only for groups of children and suitable levels of support should be determined in advance depending on the types of activity and needs of the group.

Staff

In all cases, a minimum of two staff should be present during Forest School, at all times to ensure there is adequate support for the group. All staff must read the Forest School relevant documentation for the day (off-site risk assessments) and be responsible for bringing any pupil medications with their team.

Photos & Video

Under the guidance of GDPR laws - permission will be requested via pro formal consent. The Forest Schools teacher will adhere to parental consents when taking photographs of participants. Photos or videos taken for evaluation purposes will be uploaded and saved to the school Staff-share. Where permission is refused, we will avoid photographing and videoing that pupil.

Behaviour Policy

Everyone, including staff and participants, have a responsibility to protect their own and other group members' health, safety and well-being. They should inform the Forest School Leader if anybody's actions are likely to jeopardise the safety or comfort of others.

We aim to promote:

- Self-esteem
- Self-awareness of personal abilities and limitations
- Respect and care for oneself, other people and the natural environment
- Co-operation and non-violent communication

Behaviour expectations for Staff to follow

- Be a positive role-model for participants, particularly with regards to respecting each person and the environment
- Encourage and reinforce caring and nurturing behaviour
- Be vigilant with regards to common sense safety
- Facilitate from an egalitarian and liberal approach, avoiding unnecessary rigidity or petty rules
- Avoid coercive or manipulative behaviour management, or that based on personal negative messages, as we feel these damage morale, motivation and self-esteem and are counterproductive to the ethos and objectives of Forest Schools.

Encouraging Positive Behaviour

We want to allow the greatest potential for each participant's Forest Schools experience to be transformational and therefore wish to welcome each participant from an open and unbiased viewpoint with regards to their behaviour and abilities. Whilst recognising that it is useful to have previous information about participants' needs, we believe that no child is inherently 'naughty' and hope the greater freedoms offered by a Forest School environment will allow for a more flexible interpretation of positive engagement.

We will work with each group to develop a clear set of boundaries and guidelines. Each participant will have the opportunity to voice their own feelings. Talking about how they wish to be treated and listening to the feelings of others is important as it will allow the group to work together, understand one another and ultimately become more supportive and cooperative. It will also contribute to making the Forest Schools experience a safe and enjoyable space.

De-escalation

If a situation arises in which participants are behaving in a way that threatens the safety of the group, the Forest Schools teacher will ensure the following steps are taken:

1. Recount the facts of the incident as observed, in simple language and without judgement, and if possible, mutually agree on these. Remind the participants involved of any guidelines they have not followed.
2. Listen to the involved party or parties, if necessary, gently separate them from the group for this. Ask about how they feel about the incident, empathise with them to help

them to express themselves and take responsibility for their feelings. Ask them to imagine how they think their behaviour has affected everyone else.

3. Talk with them to establish what their needs in the situation were and to understand how they were not being met. Discuss what their needs might be now and encourage them to consider the needs of everyone else present.

4. Help them to express any requests they might have clearly and in positive language. These can be requests of themselves, others, situations or of the environment.

5. Encourage discussion of new strategies, so if a similar situation arises the participant(s) feel able to communicate their needs without resorting to negative behaviours.

Recording & Reporting

In all cases of Physical Intervention, the Forest School Leader or team staff will complete a Sleuth/Info Exchange and inform parents/carers.

Where relevant, any significant issues or incidents will be discussed with parents or carers in a private conversation, when the participant is not present.



Belmont
School

What do we do in Forest School?

We Create



We Toast



Make Fires



We Explore



We use tools



We build dens



We help in the community



We walk local nature trails



We investigate



We observe



We make Magic



We live great stories

