

Jenyms First School & Nursery



Forest School Handbook



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What is Forest School at Jenyns?

Forest school involves a sequence of regular sessions which all take place in our wooded area and develop the relationship between the learner and the natural world.

Initial sessions establish clear physical and behavioural boundaries to enable all sessions to be safe.

Each session includes observations which support the planning of future sessions.

The children learn about how to care for their environment as well as how to identify seasonal changes and features of their surroundings.

Forest School gives children the time and space to develop skills and confidence through active exploration in the outdoors environment.

Activities are introduced and supported by practitioners who then step back to observe the children as they follow their initiative.

Sessions will be planned which, over time, will develop skills and qualities which will support the children's journey through school and beyond as they develop and learn.

Forest school activities are designed to develop the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional and spiritual aspects of the learner.

The holistic development fosters resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

Children are given opportunities to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves, to be brave and challenge themselves to try new things. Forest school embraces a growth mindset.

Forest school is a learner-centred pedagogical approach which responds to the interests and needs of learners. Skills are modelled and built upon through carefully planned programmes.

Play is recognised to be of great importance for learning and development in Forest School. Children are encouraged to make choices and follow their own interests and explore ideas.

A key feature of each session is reflection through which learners and practitioners recognise and understand their own achievements and develop emotional intelligence.

What kinds of activities will the children do at Jenyns?

The children will play lots of games to develop teamwork, cooperation and communication skills. They will climb trees, carry logs and run to support physical development. Small achievable tasks, paired activities and the carefully planned sequence of activities will develop self-esteem. They will develop confidence by trying new things and sharing ideas, mutual encouragement and will take pride in their own achievements such as making a shelter. At the end of each session, reflection on strengths, challenges and goals will support development of emotional intelligence. Successes and failures, adapting ideas and responding to different kinds of weather will foster resilience and encourage the children to persevere to achieve goals. Activities such as making puppets and exploring their own emotions and feelings will promote spiritual growth. Creativity is encouraged through open-ended tasks such as making a wand, a tree spirit/creature with forest floor litter (leaves, twigs, stones and buds), weaving wool and exploring imaginative play.

Learning through self-directed activity, making own choices and self-challenging at a level they feel comfortable with encourages independence. The children are given time to explore their own ideas and problem solve.

What are the benefits?

The children develop health and fitness outdoors in the fresh air. Well-being is enhanced by outdoor activity.

Life skills are developed through Forest School; self-confidence, resilience, perseverance, creativity, independence, decision-making

and emotional intelligence are just a few of these. Children learn skills and acquire knowledge at the level and rate that is appropriate for everyone.

The constraints of the classroom are removed.

Time and space are provided for individual enquiry and exploration in a multi-sensory way which develops fine and gross motor skills.

Different areas of learning are linked through hands-on discovery and Forest School supports many areas of the National Curriculum and EYFS framework.

Frequency of sessions.

EYFS will have a session each week

KS1 & 2 will have six sessions in consecutive week blocks during the year (termly).

Sessions will usually take place on the school site but may involve local walks for which additional risk assessment will be made.

The 6 key principles of forest School

1. Forest school involves a sequence of regular sessions rather than occasional or isolated sessions

At least every other week and ideally over the year to cover through the seasons

2. These take place outside in a wooded area or other natural outdoor environment and develop a long-term relationship between the learner and the natural world. Forest School gives children the time and space to develop skills and confidence through active exploration in the outdoors environment. It is not simply taking the classroom lessons outside. The children learn about how to care for their

environment and develop environmentally sustainable attitudes as well as how to identify seasonal changes and features of their surroundings.

3. Activities are introduced and supported by practitioners who then step back to observe the children as they follow their initiative and interests. Essentially it is a learner-led experience. Play is recognised to be of great importance for learning and development in Forest School. Children are encouraged to make choices and follow their own interests and explore ideas.
4. Forest school activities are designed to develop the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional and spiritual aspects of the learner. This holistic development supports learners to become resilient, confident, independent and creative.
5. Initial sessions establish clear physical and behavioural boundaries to enable all sessions to be safe. Children are given opportunities to take supported risks, to be brave and challenge themselves to try new things. Forest school embraces a growth mindset.
6. Forest school is run by qualified Forest School Practitioners

Health and Safety

The health and safety of all participants is of paramount importance.

To ensure all risk is minimised:

The ratio of adults to children in-line with school policy will ensure the safety of all involved.

Risk/benefit assessments are carried out.

Staff are first aid trained.

First aid and emergency equipment are on site.

A health and safety policy is in place and regularly reviewed.

Activities involving use of tools or fire are overseen by a qualified level 3 Forest School practitioner.

Children will wear suitable clothes and footwear. This means arms and legs are covered and waterproof jackets are worn if wet, and footwear is suitable for rough or muddy terrain (trainers or wellies).

Extreme Weather

Forest school will take place in almost all weather.

The following exceptions apply:

1. Children do not have suitable clothes
2. Windy weather which may cause falling branches
3. Access to the field is dangerous due to being very wet or icy

Clothing

The following clothes are required to keep children safe, warm and dry.

Summer

Long trousers or leggings

Long-sleeved top

Sunscreen

Sunhat

Walking boots, trainers or wellington boots (no open toes sandals)

Waterproof coat/trousers

Winter

Warm coat

Wellington boots or walking boots

Warm scarf, hat, gloves

Warm trousers or joggers

Long-sleeved fleece or jumper

Waterproof coat/trousers

Behaviour

To ensure the safety of all children and adults during forest school clear expectations and rules need to be established prior to Forest School sessions. These are in line with the school behaviour policy with the addition of the following expectations.

- Children will return immediately to the Forest School Shelter when they hear the call '1, 2, 3 where are you?' and will respond '3, 2, 1 here I come!' as they do so.
- There is a strict 'no pick, no lick' policy in place during Forest School sessions. Children must avoid putting fingers near their mouth, face or eyes. When eating or drinking hands should be washed first.
- Sticks up to the size of one arm's length may be carried but never thrown. Longer sticks or fallen branches will be dragged or carried by at least two people with one person at each end.
- Stones will not be thrown but can be picked up and carried. They may be dropped with care and consideration of their surroundings.
- All tools will be used in line with the appropriate risk assessment guidance.
- The forest School site will be left as it is found.
- Children will not leave the wooded area on the school field during Forest School sessions unless instructed to by the Forest School leader.

- Children will not cross the fire pit or enter it unless invited by the Forest School leader even when there is no fire lit to establish good practice.
- Tree climbing should only be allowed if the tree has been assessed as weight-bearing and sound, by an adult. An adult should be present and the area beneath the tree should be checked for sharp or dangerous objects in case of a fall. Children should not climb higher than 1m high.

Accident and Emergency

A qualified first aider will always be with the group. The Forest School leader is Paediatric first aid trained.

The class first aid box will be taken to the Forest School site by the class teacher at every session.

A burns kit, fire blanket and fire-resistant gloves will be used if a fire is being lit.

A mobile phone will always be taken to the forest School session so that an ambulance can be called and contact details can be accessed from the school office.

Children's inhalers and medication will be taken to sessions by the class teachers in case they are needed during the session.

Ice packs, clingfilm, defibrillator will be available in the school building/ in the library area.

Safeguarding Children, Confidentiality and Forest School

Please see and follow Jenyns First School and Nursery Safeguarding policy.

Safety

Risk assessments will be read by all staff attending sessions.

Tools will be used in-line with risk assessments and with appropriate adult-child ratio.

Spare clothes will be available if children get wet or cold.

All adults working with children will have undergone the appropriate selection process and have been subject to DBS checks.

There will always be three adults or more working with class groups of children during Forest School.

All sessions will be planned by a level 3 forest school practitioner.

Lost Child

Throughout the session regular head counts will be made by the Forest School Leader. Children will be reminded of the areas that are out of bounds and where they may explore. The school field is secure however the school building can be entered from the field. If a child is missing the school office will be informed immediately. If the child cannot be located the Police will be called immediately and the parents will be informed.

Tools

Tools will be used in accordance with appropriate risk assessments. Tools are only used for a specific purpose. All adults should model correct and safe tool use, storage and transportation at all times. When using a tool, they are used well away from others in the group,

(two arm's length and the tool length) and ensuring that others are aware that a tool is in use. Only walking is permitted when transporting a tool.

All tools are counted out and back in at the beginning and end of each session in which they are used. When not in use in the Forest they are kept secured away in a locked cupboard in Class 1. Before each tool is to be used it will be checked for damage and working order.


Each tool type is kept in their own suitable containers. Children must never be allowed to help themselves and will always have adult supervision when collecting, transporting and using tools.

Risk/ Benefit Assessments

Activity	Benefits	Risks	Precautions	Overall risk rating
Fire lighting and cooking	Children will learn about fire safety, warmth, well-being, reflection time	Burns from fire	Children reminded of safety rules: do not enter fire circle unless invited, do not cross the fire circle, kneel when near the fire, stay an arm's length from the fire when toasting marshmallow, stay 2m from fire at all other times, long hair to be tied back and loose clothing tucked in. Buckets of water available for quenching fire and immersing burns, burns kit, fire blanket and fire gloves used if handling cooking equipment/Kelly kettle	medium

		<p>Burns from food</p> <p>Burns when toasting marshmallows/ skewers catching fire</p> <p>Smoke inhalation</p> <p>Clothes catching alight</p> <p>Fire remaining hot/ fire spreading.</p>	<p>or adding logs to the fire.</p> <p>Participants advised to wait for food to cool before eating, marshmallows to be sandwiched between two biscuits, water bottles to be available for drinking.</p> <p>Marshmallows cooked with adult/ child ratio of 1:1 at arms length on long wooden skewers. No gloves worn by children. Soak skewers in water to avoid catching alight</p> <p>Wind direction constantly assessed and children moved, if in the direction of smoke, dry suitable wood to be burnt.</p> <p>Fire blanket present, first aid and burns kit, cling film. First aider present.</p> <p>Allow fire to burn down and douse gradually with water, being aware of steam near children if still present.</p> <p>Spread/rake embers and ensure they have cooled and are fully extinguished with water.</p>	
Exploring wooded area	Physical exercise, muscle strengthening,	Trip hazards: uneven ground, exposed tree roots, stumps,	Safety talk to encourage children to look around them, appropriate footwear, identify and	low

	Balance, coordination, teamwork, communication skills	wet leaves on ground, ice/snow causing slips, trips and falls, cuts, grazes	remove dangerous trip hazards if possible, during pre-session sweep. Children to wear gloves if	
Exploring wooded area	Physical exercise, muscle strengthening, Balance, coordination, teamwork, communication skills	Low branches causing eye injuries	Point out low branches, Avoid running under trees	low
Winter Forest School sessions	Learning about the seasons, self-care,	Exposure to extreme temperature and rain and snow, ice and fog	Use the wooden shelter or erect tarpaulin shelter. Ensure children are suitably clothed. Assess conditions and postpone session if necessary	low
Summer Forest School sessions	Learning about the seasons, self-care,	Exposure to sun/ heat	Wear sun hats, use sunscreen, stay in shaded areas, and provide water. In full foliage seasons high-vis vest for children who are identified as likely to leave the wooded area (e.g. consider very young, new to Jenyns or SEND)	low
Exploring Wooded area	Learning about risks and hazards of nature and	Stings, skin contact with harmful fruit, fungi or plants	Safety talk, teach plant identification, ensure hands are always washed	medium

	how to keep safe, plant identification skills		<p>before eating. Establish 'No pick, No lick' rule. Highlight areas with stinging nettles and brambles.</p> <p>Make children aware of Lords and Ladies which grow in our wooded areas and all parts of the plant are poisonous and can irritate your skin</p>  <p>https://www.rhs.org.uk/weeds/lords-and-ladies</p> <p>Monitor site for nest activity.</p> <p>Ensure auto adrenal injectors & inhalers are carried for children with known allergies</p>	
Tree climbing	Upper body strength, coordination, taking supported risks	Falls, grazes	Check tree branches are sound and weight-bearing, climb to 1m height only, only allow tree climbing supervised by an adult, check area beneath tree for dangerous/ sharp protrusions	medium
Using a bow saw	Upper body strength, self-confidence, hand/eye coordination, teamwork,	Cuts	Give tools talk for bow saw prior to using, keep bow saw in designated tool bag, use a glove on the non-sawing hand, replace blade cover when	low

	supported risks,		not in use, use a stand to rest wood on when sawing, use crossed arms to hold wood securely with a partner when sawing. Supervise 1 adult to 2 children ratio, Use an arms-length away from anyone else. Ensure all tools are counted and present at the end of each session.	
Using peelers	Life skills, self-confidence building, decision making	Cuts, abrasions	Always peel away from the body, supervise 1 adult to 2 children ratio. Check peelers are sharp and clean. Gloves to be worn on hand not holding tools if preferred.	medium
Using hammers	Construction skills, co-ordination	Bruising fingers	Supervise 1 adult to 2 children ratio, Use an arms-length away from anyone else	medium
Using hand-drills		Cuts,	Use a conker clamp if drilling a hole in conkers. Drill onto wooden surface, never onto knee or hand	medium
Tools-checking cleaning, storage	Taking supported risks, decision making, creativity	Cuts from blunt/rusty tools, unsupervised use of tools, issue of tools	Ensure all tools are kept in lidded labelled containers or suitable tool bag, Ensure tools are kept in dry, locked storage or cupboard indoors when not in use, check tools are clean and dry after use and in good working	

			order prior to use (blades sharp) and blades oiled at the start of each half term. Count all tools at the end of session and ensure all are accounted for/present.	
Using ropes and cords	Developing survival skills, perseverance, upper body strengthening, fine motor skills, self-confidence, teamwork and cooperative skills	Potential trip, fall, strangulation hazards	Ensure all ropes and cords are stored out of children's reach in a dry locked cupboard (inside).	low

Forest School Essentials Rucksack Contents

Class lists for register,
 Spare clothes
 Hand sanitiser
 Mobile phone
 Wet wipes
 Water for first aid
 Protective gloves
 Burns kit
 Forest School Handbook

To accompany rucksack

Class medical first aid kit

Children's medication (asthma pumps/adrenaline auto injectors)

Forest School Resources list

Tools

2 X loppers for cutting anything up to the size of 20p

6 X stubby hammers for Hapa-zome

6 X palm drills (handheld)

6 X conker clamps

10 X speed peelers (for peeling bark from/ sharpening sticks)

1 X bowsaw

Fire kit

1 X burns medical kit

1 X fire blanket

2 X pair fire gloves

3 X fire flint and striker

Kelly kettle

Other Resources

2 X tarpaulins

Tent pegs

Selection of elastic bungees

4 X work/ seating benches (loose tops/moveable)

Hempex rope 24mm X 30m for tug of war/ knot demo

Sisal string (massive ball)

Box of wool

2 X water carriers

2 X large black buckets

To also use...

Magnifiers, binoculars, felt-tips, scissors, pencils.

Insurance

Through Hertfordshire County Council Insurance Scheme

Photography and social media

Forest school sessions and observation can be captured using the i-pad or school cameras to take photos and videos of children whose parents have given consent for this and used in accordance with their wishes. Be mindful of who is in photos and videos and where these are used.

Forest School Leader Responsibilities

- Ensure the wooded area is safe prior to sessions by doing a sweep to check for any litter, glass, animal faeces, fallen or broken branches which may fall.
- Check weather conditions and forecast which may impact on safety e.g. extreme hot or cold, thunder which will make Forest School Sessions inadvisable or require a revised program e.g. fog if a campfire is planned.
- Plan and provide the Forest School sessions in accordance with the Forest School Handbook – appropriate to the age, stage of development of the children, season and weather
- Wear appropriate clothing and be good role models to promote and embed safe practice.
- To fulfil the role of responsible person for Health & Safety - keeping the children safe
- To appropriately brief other adults participating in Forest School at any given time
- Ensure safety rules and expectations of behaviour are explicit to children and followed.

Adult responsibilities

- Read and be familiar with the Forest School Handbook and sign a declaration if regularly supporting delivery of Forest School sessions- all teaching and support staff (to be kept in school office).
- Wear appropriate clothing and be good role models to promote and embed safe practice.
- Support and assist the Forest School Leader
- Support keeping children safe

- Support with toileting (children will need to be accompanied back to the school building to use their own class toilets by a DBS checked adult/ member of staff)
- Support with activities as guided by the Forest School Leader

Declaration that this handbook has been read by adults supporting Forest School

I certify that I have read and understood the Jenyns First School and Forest School Handbook

Print name	Signature	Date

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are pleased to inform you that this half term, your child will take part in Forest School sessions each Friday afternoon.

Forest School started in Scandinavia and is an opportunity to learn in an outdoor environment. It provides opportunities for learning through play and exploration of the natural environment.

Our Forest School sessions will take place in our woodland area next to the school field where we have a range of different trees, a wooden shelter and fire circle. Here the children will learn about the flora and fauna that is naturally found there and how to care for and respect their natural surroundings.

Forest School supports your child to develop many life skills and reflects our school Learning Powers. It encourages resilience, perseverance, teamwork, curiosity, problem solving, creativity, a growth mindset and a 'Can-do' attitude. The children will be encouraged to make choices and take supported risks as they engage in a range of activities, learn about the seasons and the woodland environment, and develop skills using a range of tools, learn to tie knots and make a range of woodcrafts. We believe that the holistic experience we provide at Forest School, will support every child to become confident and achieve their full potential.

As a trained level 3 Forest School Practitioner, I will lead and plan these sessions. I will be supported by your child's teaching team.

We will be out in all types of weather, so it is essential that the children are suitably dressed. In cold weather, they will need warm clothes (hats and gloves and a warm coat). Joggers or waterproof coats and trousers and boots are essential as they may get muddy and wet. It is important that they have their arms and legs covered at any time of year as they need to be able to kneel and move through the undergrowth. In summer they will need sun lotion and a hat.

For more information, please visit our school website to see children enjoying our Forest School sessions @ <https://www.jenyns.herts.sch.uk/forest-school-1/> or <http://www.forestschoollassociation.org/>

I very much look forward to working with your child's class this term.
Sandra Baxter

How to make Conker wreaths

You will need;

Conkers, wire, ribbon, wool or forest litter, wire, hand drills, conker clamp

Instructions

Collect conkers from your woodland area or local walk. Model how to clamp the conkers in the conker clamp to keep them secure and then use the hand drill to make a hole through the conker. The conkers can be safely drilled using the clamp in this way. Highlight to never drill though anything in the direction of your hand or knee. Use a woken surface to work on if not using a clamp. Afterwards the conkers can be threaded onto the wire. This can then be bent to form any desired shape. A circle can be made by twisting the wire ends to secure them. End of wire can be sharp. Use with caution and 1-2 adult supervision with young children. Ribbon, wool, catkins, grasses etc can be wound around the wire to adorn/ embellish end product.



Precautions-

- An old coin can be stuck in the back of the conker clamp to prevent over enthusiastic drilling going through into the wood of the clamp.
- Depending on diameter of the wire, pliers or scissors will be needed to cut it. Use pliers with 1-to-1 supervision with young children or wire can be pre-cut.
- Ensure all hand-drills and clamps and wire is collected and accounted for at end of session.
- Hand- drills will need to be cleaned afterwards as conker drilling leaves residue.

How to make 'Stickman' Puppets

You will need;

Hazel or other sticks- a y-shaped stick provides opportunity for 'legs',
String or wool,
Peelers,
Felt-tips or colouring pencils,
Scissors,
Forest litter, leaves, catkins etc...

Instructions

Select 2 fallen sticks or cut two lengths from a piece of hazel which is strong and durable.

Use a peeler to remove bark at the top of the longer stick on one side for drawing a face and where you can later attach features e.g. hair using catkins or other forest litter to make hair. You can also peel back the bark at both ends of the shorter stick where the hands will be.

You will need to be familiar with or learn to tie two knots to secure a length of string or wool to a stick and then bind the two sticks together at right angles.

1. Clove hitch- model curling two loops and laying the first loop on top of the second and pushing a stick through both loops before pulling the knot tight to grip the stick. This secures a piece of string to a stick.
2. Square lashing. Position two sticks on top of each other at right angles to form a cross (this is where the 'shoulders' of the puppet will be. Model taking the string under the stick that is under and over the stick that is over the other stick moving the cross 90° as if passes each stick. Pass the string all the way around 4 times 90° four or five times, keeping the string taut, until the sticks are secured in the cross position.

Finally, scraps of material, leaves or forest litter can be used to embellish your puppet and make them ready for a show.



How to make a wooden owl

You will need;

A piece of wood, bowsaw, hammer, nails, hand drill, protective glove for not tooled hand, forest litter

Instructions

With a partner using cross arm method cut a short section off a piece of wood/branch (diameter 5-10cm) with a bow saw. One end needs to be at a 45-degree slant to make the face.

Cut 2 X small and 2 X smaller slices off a piece of wood (roughly 5cm and 3cm diameter) Use nails to attach the owl's eyes placing a leaf between the larger disk and the body to secure the 'ears'.

Wings can be attached using nails with suitably found bark as can a beak.
A hand drill can be used to make holes to insert twigs to make leg/feet and other appendages (see photo).



How to tie ropes to erect a temporary shelter using a tarpaulin (A-frame shelter)

You will need: a tarpaulin, pegs, cords, a mallet, hammer or heavy dense log.



Find a flat area where the ground is clear between two sturdy trees (several metres apart) ensuring canopy above is sound and no dead wood or broken branches are above.

Attach a rope to one tree using a timber hitch and take it across to the second tree and secure it horizontal to the ground, at a height of about 1.5 m using a tension knot to create a ridge to support your tarpaulin.

Place a tarpaulin over the ridge so that the sides hang down to equal lengths.

On one side secure two corners of the tarpaulin to the ground with cords tied to each corner using pegs to providing shelter from wind and rain.
Repeat on the other side.

If you wish one or both sides can be elevated:

Find two long sturdy sticks to use as poles to hold up the other two corners. Secure two short cords to the corners of the tarp using the existing holes in the corners. Secure the poles close to the tarp with the cord and then peg the other end of the cord with a peg so that it is taut and at 45 degrees from the former of the tarp. This will provide an 'awning' effect and additional shelter which can be dropped and secured like the other side if the weather worsens.

To prevent the tarpaulin from slipping or bunching on the supporting horizontal cord, the ends can be fastened to it using short cord.

Making wooden shelters made of branches.



Teepee-style den

These can be made around a suitable tree with a fork shape to lean branches up against.

Collect long, strong, straight branches.

Make sure branches are steady and secure and will not fall (Adult supervision at all times. Remember safety rule of carrying branches and sticks longer than your arm- one person at each end of the stick/ branch)

Weave thin sticks amongst the branches.

Cover with forest litter, moss, small fallen branches with foliage on them to fill gaps and make the den both more weatherproof and camouflaged.

Make a soft floor using fallen leaves, moss etc...