

Robin Woods Den

What is a Forest Schools?

The origins of Forest Schools steams back to Sweden in the 1950s when it was used as an approach to learning about the natural world. Due to its success and benefits for learning it was an integral part of Denmark's Early Years programme by the 1980s. In 1995 it was introduced to the United Kingdom by Bridgewater College in Somerset and it has been growing and evolving in this country ever since.

Children attending a Forest School visit the same piece of woodland on a regular basis over an extended period of time. The woodland is complementary to the school classroom. Overtime children and adults connect with this site value and respect it. Forest School gives children the opportunity to challenge themselves and take risks within safe boundaries.

Woodlands site where our Forest School activities may take place

Dingley Dell

Crossflatts Primary School is very fortunate position of having its very own enclosed piece of woodland right in the school grounds. This is an ideal site for Forest School activities as there is a rich variety of flora and fauna in a safe, enclosed area. There is also the added bonus of the beck running right through the middle of Dingley Dell.

Prince of Wales Park

Prince of Wales Park near Bingley has a variety of footpaths through wooded grounds, with a mix of gentle trails and steeper rambles. The beautiful trees are perfect for a shady stroll, moving out to open heathland towards the centre of the park.

St Ives Estate Country Park

The St Ives Estate is a wonderful Country Park with woodlands, open moor, and a wildflower meadow, and paths throughout. The Adventure Playground is a fantastic feature for the children, and Coppice Pond offers both fishing opportunities, and a chance to feed the ducks.

Some of the benefits of attending Robin Woods Den

- The woodland setting is important for the biodiversity and habitat diversity offered. Its robustness and green cover with mystery offers opportunities of imaginative play and physical challenges with lots to do and see.

- Attention is given to learner led, flexible hands on activities. This in turn builds self-esteem and confidence in children which furnishes children with a high potential of motivation towards lifelong learning
- Through regular contact with the forest, children become acclimatised to their new and different environment and this leads to a reinforcement of learning which can be extended through progressive challenges.
- Fun and freedom factor – independent or group activities set in a challenging outdoor environment, which is managed for safety, enables the development of new and strong relationships between children and adults.
- Due to a safe boundaries and a high adult to child ratio, children have access to greater degree of freedom, for both individuals and groups.
- Provides opportunity for children to learn through first-hand experience, about the importance of looking after our woodlands and gives them an insight into sustainability and management of our forests.
- FS Leader training ensures delivery of a high quality Forest Schools experience for all
- Forest Schools brings communities together

Forest School Code of Conduct General Code of Conduct during Forest School sessions:

- Respect for ourselves, each other and the woodland
- Return to FS leader/member of the team when the FS leader/ member of the team shouts '1,2,3 where are you?' or makes the 'duck call'.
- Never throw any objects
- Leave no trace
- Do not eat anything we find remembering our motto ("No picking, no licking")

Boundaries

Boundaries in the Forest School area will always be clearly marked out. Children will know not to go beyond these areas. If a child is lost sight of, then shout '1, 2, 3, where are you?' The child should reply '1, 2, 3 I'm over here'. This strategy will be introduced to the children and practised.

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks no longer than their arm's length but they must make sure that they think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks can be dragged or carried with a child at both ends. Sticks must not be thrown, nor should children be allowed to pull them from living trees.

Tree climbing

Children will be very closely supervised with suitable adult child ratios. Check ground cover for sharp objects and check 'climbing trees' for loose and rotten branches. Children are allowed to explore to their own limits but an adult will intervene if they feel that their choices are unsafe. Children will not be allowed to climb higher than an arm's reach of a responsible adult.

Rope and string use

Encourage connecting and transporting materials. Prevent tying up other children or themselves. If a child has a good idea and wants, for example, to try to build a rope swing, do help them and use the chance to model appropriate knot tying.

Carrying & transporting materials

The children should be encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by hand or using ropes. The safe way to lift, by bending your knees and keeping a straight back should be modelled by all adults. Heavier objects can be rolled, dragged or carried by more people.

Toileting

Not all our woodland sites have toilet facilities, we will make use of them on sites that do. A toilet tent will be set up for all children to use outside of our boundaries where no toilet facilities are available. They will be offered the use of the 'Toileting Kit' which consists of a toilet roll and cleaning gel. All children will be taken to and from the toilet tent by a responsible team member.

Eating and drinking

Our 'No picking, no licking' motto and no nut policy will apply at all times. Prevent children eating anything found in woods, such as berries or seeds. Keep reminding them about fingers and hands in mouths and noses. When we take drinks or snacks outside, ensure children use wipes to clean their hands first.

Base camp

Base Camp is an area in each woodland site, setup to be the main base for the day.

There is a fire square marked out by 4 logs or a fire circle marked out by rope in the centre – children must not enter the fire square or circle. Children will learn to always go around the fire square or circle area – even if there is no fire lit. This will be reinforced through games. The seating area is 'tumbling distance' from the fire pit. Children will only enter the square or

circle if they are asked to do so by an adult and this will only ever be a maximum of 2 children at a time.

Leaving the site

We will respect our 'leave no trace' motto and will always aim to leave the site as we found it. We must always make sure that there is nothing visible to the public, left behind by us.

Collecting fire wood

We may have access to any of the dead wood within the area. Wood should be collected in three thicknesses – matchstick size, pencil size and thumb thickness. This is a great sorting activity for the children and not as easy as it sounds!

Lighting a fire

The FS leader will take control of this and members of the team will be briefed before we start. Children will be taught how to build fires, use a fire steels, make and light fires but this will always be under very close supervision. There will always be water, fire gloves, fire blanket and a burns kit near by the fire to use.

Forest School Session Procedures

1. The FS leader and members of the team will sweep the woodland area before the beginning of each session to ensure that it is safe for the children.
2. Adults should arrive at 9am with their children for registration at the agreed meeting point for the woodland site. All Children should be appropriately clothed for the weather (see "what to wear and what to bring")
3. The FS leader will take all children to enter the woodland respectfully and calmly and after carrying out their own 'Safety Sweep' will take a seat in base camp.
4. Throughout the session the children will be encouraged to initiate their own play/learning with a balance of completing the challenges suggested and members of the team will be there to support and facilitate this.
5. We may have a campfire
6. Lunchtime all children will sit down whilst having lunch

7. At the end of the session, the group will meet back at Base Camp to share their experiences.
8. The children will all help to tidy away all resources and equipment at the end of the session.
9. Tools will be counted back in.
10. The campfire will be extinguished properly.
11. The FS Leader will take all children back to the agreed meeting point for 4:00pm to be collected by their adults.

Registration

Takes place from 9:00am until 9:15am at the agreed location for each woodland site with FS leader. Please ensure you bring your booking/consent form and payment if we haven't already received it. We can't take responsibility for your child without a signed booking/consent form.

What to wear and what to bring

A packed lunch (no nuts please), a drink with a screw top, a named rucksack or bag and any prescribed medication such as inhaler or epi-pen.

Clothing in cold weather

- Clothing your happy for your children to get wet and muddy
- Extra layers and socks
- Change of clothing (recommended for younger ones)
- Waterproofs
- Strong comfortable footwear
- Hat and Gloves

Clothing in warmer weather

- Sun hat or cap
- Sun cream
- Change of clothing (recommended for younger ones)

Forest School activities will take place regardless of the weather. It will only be cancelled in the event of the site being unsafe for children and adults or in the absence of the Forest School Leader. For example, very strong winds that may make trees unsafe. Cold and rain will not be a reason for cancellation, unless conditions in the woods are unsafe.

Health and Safety

Robin Woods Den adhere to all Forest School health and safety procedures and comply with regulations regarding safeguarding and data protection. Our 'Health and Safety Policy' covers the safety of our children, members of the team and other visitors. However, Forest School programmes are likely to include activities which are considered higher risk than usual. We will seek to minimise risk by following appropriate procedures for more risky activities, such as tool use and fires, and by carrying out risk assessments, covering key hazards which the children may come into contact with.

Team considerations

- The Forest School leader, Stephen Cannar is currently part way through his Level 3 Forest School qualification and currently holds his Outdoor Paediatric First Aid certificate.
- There will always be another member of staff in attendance at Forest School.
- All members of the team will have their DBS check.
- All members of the team helping in the forest must read the handbook and then sign and date the handbook inside cover to confirm this.

Area considerations

- The woodland area has been checked carefully and a risk assessment has been carried out. This will be reviewed quarterly to reflect the changes in the seasons.
- A thorough sweep of the area will be completed by the FS leader prior to each session.
- Any animal excretion or glass found during the sweep will be removed.
- Expectations and boundaries are made clear to the children.
- There are no obvious slopes or ditches in the woodland area.
- The children will be educated about not eating anything from the wood and we have a 'No Picking, No Licking' motto.
- The use of the parks is authorised by Bradford Council. We have met with Assistant Trees and Woodlands Manager Andrew Cutts to explore specific site issues and discuss their terms and conditions.
- Robin Woods Den have taken out appropriate liability insurance.

Equipment considerations

1. The safety of all equipment will be checked on a weekly basis.
2. Children will always be dressed appropriately. In warm weather it will still be a requirement that their legs are kept covered.

Emergency procedures

1. In case of an emergency a member of the team will blow the emergency whistle 3 times and the children will congregate at the base camp area at each of our woodland sites we use.
2. The qualified First Aider (who is also the Forest School leader) will attend to any casualties with a member of the team and with regard for maintenance of required supervision ratios for the rest of the group. At least one first aider must be on site at all times. A record of changes in casualties' state and anything administered to them to be made if possible.
3. If necessary, the emergency services will be contacted by the FS leader. A charged mobile phone will be taken to every session. A designated adult will be sent to meet the emergency vehicle at the entrance on. **The main entrance to Crossflatts Primary School for Dingley Dell. Lady Lane with the lodge for Prince of Wales Park. The main entrance to the park for St. Ives Estate Country Park.**

Give the following information to the 999 operators:

- **Dingley Dell, Crossflatts, BD16 2EP – Crossflatts Primary School main entrance**
- **Prince of Wales Park BD16 3DF - Lady Lane with the lodge**
- **St. Ives Estate Country Park, Harden, BD16 1AT**

4. An additional adult is to ensure that the rest of the group are safe and away from any dangers.
5. Where appropriate the next of kin should be informed as soon as practicably possible after the incident. The FS leader is responsible for doing this.
6. Following this the FS leader will inform the landowner of the site as soon as possible.
7. An incident report must be filled in, on-site, if possible and then logged when back.

Uninvited person/stranger

In the event of an unwanted person/stranger in our area they will be challenged by staff and asked to leave politely, unless they are just passing through as it is open to the public. If they refuse to do so and the Forest School leader feels that the children are at risk then the group will be evacuated from the site. If a child is involved, then the police should be called and the child/children involved should be removed from the situation and made to feel safe. Parents/guardian of the child/children should be briefed by the FS leader asap.

Dogs

In the event of a dog entering our woodland area the children will act as they have been taught to:

- Call out 'dog' to warn others (especially those who are afraid of dogs)
- Stand still with arms crossed over the chest and head down
- Stay in that position until the dog has gone

Missing Child

In the event of a missing child the FS leader will call '1,2,3 where are you?' If the child doesn't appear then the immediate vicinity should be searched. The FS Leader will then decide what action to take, including whether to phone the police and parents.

Death / Serious Injury

In the event of death or serious injury, First Aid procedures will be followed. A member of the team will remain with the casualty whilst another member of the team removes the rest of the group, ensuring that they are safe. The FS leader who will notify the emergency services and the parents respectively.

N.B. No-one in the group should speak to the media. The names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Any enquiries from journalists must be referred to the FS leader.