Arbor Green Nursery
Forest School Handbook
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1 Insurance Certificate and guidelines
What is Forest School?

The philosophy and roots of the Forest Schools movement can be traced through a number of sources as far back as the 19th century. These include the ideas of progressive educationalists such as Pestalozzi, Rousseau and Frobel, the woodcraft movements, the Native Americans, and the Quakers. In the UK in 1928 a Forest school was formed in the New Forest. The two founding organisations, ‘Woodcraft Movement’ and ‘Forest School Camps’ still exist today. In the 1950’s it was developed in Sweden, building independence and self-esteem through hands on play in a woodland setting. The Swedish concept was then further developed by Scandinavia and other European countries and established in Denmark in the 1980’s. It was then brought to the UK in the mid 1990’s after a visit by Nursery Nurses from Somerset and Early years professionals from other parts of the UK. Denmark has a similar climate to ours and this outdoor approach to learning had a huge impact on the development of children. A 13 month study of Swedish children found the FS children far happier to their urban cousins; more balanced with greater social capacity, fewer sick days, more able to concentrate and have better coordination, have higher self-esteem and self-confidence and be able to work as part of a team.

Forest School is holistic learning through play and exploration; children learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and to use their own initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others. During Forest School children will build a shelter, light a fire and use green woodworking skills to create and build objects from the woodland around them.

They will use full size tools; learn the boundaries of behaviour, both physical and social, establish and grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

Where

Our Forest School is based at the Sundial Garden, Inverleith Park, Edinburgh. The children have named the site “Hightree Fairy Woods”

Who

The Forest school Leader is Natalie Clark, Manager of Arbor Green Nursery. Natalie holds a BA Childcare and Management, HNC childcare and education, remote emergency first aid, child and baby first aid and elementary food hygiene certificate. Natalie is working towards her level 3 Forest School leader training and hopes to complete early 2013.

Natalie will be assisted every session in the woods by one of the staff; the same staff member will go on the same 6 week block to ensure continuity of care for the children and allow the staff to document the full impact of the forest school. The staff are;

Grant Campbell who joined us in 2011 and holds BA Childhood Practice Award, baby and child first aid and food hygiene.

Jody Halley, staff member here since 2009, holder of HNC Childcare and Education, baby and child first aid and food hygiene.
Angie Dickson, staff member since 2010 and holds and PDA childhood Practice, HNC Childcare and Education, baby and child first aid and food hygiene.

Kelly Cooper, joined us in 2012 and holds a HNC Childcare and Education, baby and child first aid and food hygiene.

On occasion we may also take a work placement student or other staff members to let the see the benefits of Forest Schools.

Through weekly visits to the “Hightree Fairy Woods”, Arbor Green Nursery will instil a love of the great outdoors. Inspirational, stimulating, hands on experiences will develop self-esteem, confidence and responsibility. The use of the woodland setting, the various real tools and the natural resources will bring learning to life, creating an understanding of the balance of nature and the finite resources around us. Identifying individual learning schema’s to enable the children to learn most effectively and promote success. Planning for every child in the early session stages, then letting the children lead the sessions through their own interests. Taking informed, self-calculated risks and choices to ensure their groups safety, developing sympathy and empathy to the group around them. Working as a team to solve problems, fostering communication and negotiation skills.

A typical session

We aim to leave the nursery by 9.30am. Please dress your child in old clothes that are appropriate for the weather; If it is cold then it is best to have several thinner layers that will trap air and insulate your child, coupled with hats and gloves. If it is hot then a thin long sleeved top and long trouser/leggings will protect against sunburn and ticks. If a child is uncomfortable due to being too hot/ cold they will not be able to fully enjoy the experiences around them. We provide a waterproof suit for when the weather is wet.

We will leave the nursery and have a welcome session on the log area at the front of the nursery this will take about 5 mins. We will then set off walking to “Hightree Fairy Woods” The walk will take around 10 – 15 mins. On the walk we will talk about what we hope to see and do in the woods, sing our Forest Song, look and talk about our surroundings and just enjoy the walk up to the site. We will also take our eco squirrel Mazie.

On arrival we will split onto small groups and do a site risk assessment. We will then gather together to discuss what the plan for the day is. We will set boundaries that give the children the freedom to explore but so the adults can still see them at all times.

We will usually play a game with the children to start off with for example 1,2,3 where are you. Then we will move on the exploring and activities. To finish the session we will all have a moment to reflect on the day and share what we enjoyed or how we are feeling.

Warning- there is a high risk of your child getting muddy and enjoying it!

During every session, photos will be taken to remind the children of the activities they have taken part in and the achievements they have made. They make up observations under the curriculum for excellence to enable the Forest school team to plan the children’s next steps. These photos may be used for advertising purposes or be placed on our Nursery website and / or Facebook. If this is not acceptable please let us know in writing. We will also put
our weekly activities onto the online learning journal we will get you permission to do this at the start of the block.

**Forest school song**

This is the way we start our day  
Walking to the forest all the way  
Forest school adventures rain or shine  
In amongst the oak and pine

**The responsibilities of the Forest School leader and assistant**

We will;

Create an environment that is as safe as it can be and without undue risk to health.

Use, maintain and store equipment safely.

Ensure that all staff are competent in the work in which they are engaged.

The identification, assessment and control of hazards within the Forest School is vital in reducing accidents and incidents to eliminate or control any such risk identified.

The Forest School leader holds ultimate responsibility and liability for ensuring that the Forest School operates in a safe and minimally hazardous manner.

The Forest School team will constantly monitor the Health and Safety policy and amend it as necessary; providing resources as required. All accidents/incidents will be recorded in the Accident or Incident book, informing HSE and Care Inspectorate if necessary. The accident/incident book will be reviewed after each terms sessions to ensure policies are effective.

Ensure that all staff and students have appropriate and up to date disclosure Scotland/PVG checks.

**Insurance**

The Children Act 2004 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 place a number of legal responsibilities on the Pre-School. Arbor Green Nursery has insurance cover appropriate to its duties under this legislation, including Employer’s and Public Liability

Responsibility will in most cases rest with Arbor Green Nursery, but staff will take reasonable care, both for themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. Our certificate of insurance is attached to the back of this handbook with an email confirming all the Forest school activities are covered.  
See Appendix 1 for insurance certificate and guidelines on activities.

**Policies and Procedures**

Arbor Green Nursery will follow all its usual policies and procedures to fulfil
our first priority to keep your child safe. Opportunity, Risk and Benefits, (ORBS) will be used as a risk assessment tool to determine whether the possible risk of a child injuring themselves, eg using a saw offers the lifelong benefits of higher self-esteem, risk management, safety awareness, physical skills, communication and teamwork. There will always be risks but if we can teach the children these skills when they are young, they will be much better equipped for the future.

Forest Site Policy

The Forest School Leader will visually check site upon arrival.

The sundial gardens are very popular with dog walkers so there will possibly be excreta in the woods. If a child or adult steps in excreta the adults will wipe the excess using a stick, leaves etc. If any excreta comes into contact with children’s hands it will be immediately washed away using antibacterial products.

Forest School Leader will keep a check on the conditions and the site

If the Forest School Leader deems the site unsafe for any reason the following action will be taken:

• Forest School Leaders to gather the group ensuring head counts
• Forest School Leaders to gather equipment if safely accessible
• Forest School Leaders to exit the children via the safest route
• In the event of a fire the Emergency services will be alerted
• Forest School Leaders will contact the Nursery and if safe, return.
• The Forest School Group will stay together.

Poor Weather and Shelter Policy

Forest School sessions will go ahead in all weather conditions with only a few exceptions:

• Strong winds that make woodland areas hazardous for use due to falling debris.
• When it is dangerous to get to the “Hightree Fairy Woods” by foot due to snow, flooding or ice etc
• Very wet cold conditions where hypothermia is a real possibility.

Exposure to the elements is part of the magic of nature and therefore an integral part of forest school.

In inclement and or cold weather we will erect temporary shelters to enable us to take shelter. These shelters will consist of large and small tarpaulins and suitable rope for securing are part of our general Forest School equipment. These can be erected
quickly and easily in a manner suitable to the layout and orientation of the Forest School site being used. If there is a suitable site and enough raw materials available a more permanent structure can be constructed. We will take ground tarpaulins to provide comfort in the cooler months.

In the summer the trees in the forest will provide good sun cover. We will also erect shelters from tarpaulins if required.

**Toileting Policy**

We will ask the children to use the toilet before leaving the setting. If the children need to go to the toilet in the forest we have tissue and a spade to dispose of the waste. If we have enough helpers to release one staff member it could be possible to take a child back to the nursery. After toileting the child/staff must wash their hands with water or use antibacterial gel.

**Clothing Policy**

To ensure that the children are sufficiently protected from the weather and the forest environment we require children to be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear.

Clothing will get muddy so old home clothes are required. We require children to have long sleeves and long trousers in both winter and summer. This is particularly important in the summer to protect from tick bites, sun burn, stinging nettles and thorns.

**Winter Clothing**

The general rule is to wear lots of layers which keep in the heat and can be removed if needed. Children require:

- Thermal underwear
- Vest
- Long sleeved t-shirt/shirt
- Jumper/fleece
- Warm hat
- Gloves NB not mittens
- Wellies with warm socks or hard shoes

**Summer Clothing**

- Sun hat
- Sun cream applied before session
Lightweight long sleeved top

Lightweight long trousers

Wellies or hard shoes

Forest School leaders and staff will ensure all the children are appropriately dressed before leaving for the "Hightree Fairy Woods".

**Spare Clothes**

As we do get muddy/wet please provide your child with a full change of clothes.

**Hand Tool Safety Policy**

We are committed to providing children with access to a wide range of equipment that stimulates enjoyment, learning and development, both indoors and outdoors.

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self-confidence. To enable this is safety carried out:

Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader.

The Forest School leaders will inspect the tools before each session to ensure safety.

Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect.

Whilst using hand tools the staff to child ratio is increased depending on the tool in use. The ratios will vary from 1:1 to 1:3.

Tools will be kept in the preschool tool bag and only removed by the Forest School team.

Adult and child sized gloves will be available and are only to be used for the bracing hand. It is not advisable to use any hand tools with gloves on as it detaches the user from the tool.

Running with tools is prohibited

Pointing with tools is prohibited

Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed.

Bow saws must have a blade guard on them when not in use. Blade guards to be removed and put back only by Forest School staff.
Wood being sawn must be supported on a saw horse or a natural sawing break

- hands must be kept away from the blade. Adults and children must be given instruction and demonstration on the appropriate and safe position with which to saw.

All tools must be counted back into the tool box at the end of the session

**Fire Safety Policy**

We must understand the importance of fire safety hazards. All staff, volunteers and children are to be made aware of the fire safety procedures set out in this policy.

Campfires and the use of storm kettles are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. We aim to ensure that all children and adults participating in Forest School sessions with fires and/or storm kettles will do so safely and with as little risk to their health as possible.

**Location**

The campfire area will be enclosed by logs or large stones to prevent the spread of fire and particular attention paid to the forest floor. If there is lots of resin/peat it could be a serious fire risk so find somewhere new.

**Positioning of Children and Adults**

If there is a clear wind direction, seating in the line of smoke is to be avoided. If wind direction is variable, the leader should rearrange the seating if at all possible.

**Type of Fire**

Criss-cross fires are used to provide a large amount of heat and light and are fast burning. Long Log fires are good for cooking as they are slow burning and require little fuel.

**Cooking**

If food is to be cooked at Forest School, the Forest School leaders are responsible for ensuring that the food has been transported, cooked and stored in a 'safe to eat' manner.

The FSL will hold the Food Hygiene Qualification.

**Safety and Responsibility**

Fires are lit using a Swedish fire steel.

Fires will not be lit without the safety equipment in place - bucket of water/sand, fire and blanket.

No flammable liquids are to be used to light or accelerate fires.
No plastics are to be burnt.

Children to be taught that sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire.

The hand should never go over the fire.

Extinguishing

All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session.

Water should always be to hand during campfire sessions.

Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash, any large remains of wood, especially when using a long log fire, are separated from one another.

At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water and stirred until all smoke and steam has ceased.

Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled. It will be finely scattered throughout the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

**Storm (Kelly) kettles**

- The Kelly kettle must be placed on flat, clear ground, moving all leaf litter etc away.

- Children can feed the fire with one to one supervision, stick held at the end and dropped in from the side.

- Hands should never be placed over the top of the kettle.

- Fuel should burn itself out, but if it doesn't it must be extinguished with water (see above)

- The Kelly kettle will be removed from the fire pan by one of the Forest School leaders. To do this safely they will lift the kettle using the sides of the metal handle, pouring will then be controlled by using one hand on the top of the handle and the other on the chain.

- The Kelly kettle should never be heated with the cork in.

**Emergency Action Plan**
In the case of an injured child.

- Secure area and make safe.
- FS Leader to carry out first aid and remain and monitor casualty.
- FS Leader/ assistant to call emergency services and give location.
- FS assistant should gather all other children do a head count and keep the calm.
- Nursery manager to be called to call parents and send staff to collect other children to return to nursery
- FS Assistant to go to road beside pond to await assistance.
- FS Assistant to guide Services to casualty and either assist, or return children back to nursery

In the case of an injured Adult (assistant/ Parent/ Visitor)

- Secure area and make safe.
- FS Leader to carry out first aid and remain and monitor casualty.
- FS Leader/ any other adult to call emergency services and give location
- Nursery Manager to be called to send adult to collect children and contact next of kin.
- FS assistant to gather other children do a head count and keep them clam until help arrives.
- Keep the Forest school group together, insulate casualty and if necessary provide shelter
  - until the children are collected
- FS Leader waits and monitors casualty until Emergency services arrive.

In the case of injured FS Leader

- Assistant to secure area and make safe
- Assistant to carry out first aid.
- Assistant/ other adult to call Emergency services and give location
- Nursery Manager to be called to send adult to collect children and contact next of kin
• Forest School group stay together away from casualty if possible, insulate and if necessary provide shelter until children collected.

If an accident occurs this must be documented in the accident or incident book then depending on the severity inform the Health and Safety Executive. All incidents can be reported online but a telephone service remains for reporting fatal and major injuries only - call the Incident Contact Centre on 0845 300 9923 (opening hours Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 5 pm). [http://www.hse.gov.uk/rid dor/report.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/rid dor/report.htm)

Care inspectorate must also be informed this can be done online via eforms.

Our nearest 24 hour Accident and Emergency hospital is the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh
51 Little France Crescent
Old Dalkeith Road
Edinburgh
EH16 4SA
Telephone: 0131 536 1000
Appendix 1 – Insurance Certificate and guidelines

STERLING

NurseryCare Policy

SCHEDULE OF INSURANCE

Policy Number: NC000104732
Insured: Arbor Green Nursery
Premises: 22 Sutherland Avenue, EDINBURGH, EH4 1HP
Cover From: 02/11/2012 To: 01/11/2013
Premium £1,124.04 (inclusive of insurance premium tax)
Premium Includes 3 Year No Claims - 15% - Discount

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Age of Children: You are currently covered for children aged 0 to 5 years

Cover extends to include a Forest Schools provision as per the details provided to and agreed by Morton Michel.

Signed on behalf of STERLING INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
(Authorised Insurers)

This is an important document and should be kept with your policy. This insurance is not valid until the premium has been paid to and accepted by Morton Michel. All correspondence and premium payments to be sent to Morton Michel, Alhambra House, 9 St Michael’s Road, Croydon CR9 3DD
Forest School Activities

Guidelines and Requirements

General

1. Policies, procedures and risk assessments for each location and activity must be completed.

2. Leaders must have a Level one Forest School qualification for basic Forest School (FS) activities. For certain activities – eg. Fire making and use of tools – a level 3 qualified leader must lead the session. See below for further details.

3. You should obtain written parental consent for “forest school activities”, giving parents examples of the type of activities that would be included.

Approved and Agreed Activities.

A. The following activities are automatically covered subject to normal statutory adult to child supervision ratios

Digging, Exploring, Hikes, Woodland Walks, Treasure Hunts, Orienteering, Map Making, Bug Hunting, Hide and Seek, Shelter Making, Den Building

B. The following are automatically covered subject to enhanced conditions as specified below.

Whitling
3+ only.
Whittling to be by potato peeler or suitable knives.

1:2 supervision ratio
Glove to be worn on non-tool hand.
Use of Saws

3+ only
Hand saws only, no power saws and must be type and age appropriate.

1:1 supervision ratio for children 3-8, 1:2 supervision ratio for over 8s. If working in pairs, then 1: one pair for under 8s and 1: 2 pairs for over 8s.

Glove to be worn on non-tool hand.
A Forest School Skills level 3 required for supervision of use of saws.

Fire Making
3+ only
A Forest School Skills level 3 required for supervision of making and using fires.
Fire to be lit and extinguished by adults only, children to be kept outside a one
metre fire circle. (See NB below)
Supervision ratio 1:4

NB: If children are to light fires and/or put them out, this to be referred to Morton Michel. The minimum age and supervision ratio requirements will be increased in these circumstances.

Cooking on Fires
3+ only
For cooking with pots and pans and the like, 1:2 supervision ratio for under 8s and 1:4 for over 8s. All other cooking, 1:4 supervision ratio.

A Forest School Skills level 3 required for supervision of making and using fires. Children not cooking to be kept outside a one metre fire circle.

Tree Climbing
3+ only
Supervision ratio 1:1 for under 8s with adult standing directly below child.
Supervision ratio 1:2 for over 8s with adult standing directly below child.
Maximum height 5ft for under 8’s, 6ft for over 8’s.

Other Activities
Underwriters may consider other activities but will require full details of the type of activity, supervision ratios and ages of children involved before considering them on a case by case basis.