



Forest School Handbook

Forest School Leaders:

Hayley Compton
(Nursery)

Matilda Hockham
(Reception, Year 1 & Year 2)

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Introduction

- Banstead Preparatory School was established in September 2017 and provides education to children from 2-11 years old. Forest School sessions are currently offered to Nursery and Pre-prep children.
- The site for Forest School Sessions is owned and managed by Banstead Commons Conservators and we have permission to use the woodland area on a weekly basis.
- Forest School sessions give the children the opportunity to be outdoors and take in all it offers them naturally.

We are lucky to have access to woodland areas within close proximity to our school grounds, so it is only a short walk away. The woodland area offers a unique teaching and learning experience in an ever-changing environment, capturing children's curiosity, stimulating their senses, building their self-confidence and nurturing their well-being. Opportunities abound to explore and enquire, developing language and reasoning skills, independence and perseverance.

Forest School Staffing

Forest School Leader: Hayley Compton and Matilda Hockham
Forest School Level 3 Leaders Award
Paediatric First Aid

There will be two other members of staff at every session, accompanying the Forest School Leader, with a maximum of 24 children.

Forest School sessions are to be led by the Forest School Level 3 trained member of staff at all times. The Ratio of adult to pupil should never exceed 1:8. When using tools or fire the ratio should always be 1:1, this means when using a bow saw for example the leader should be working with just one child. Similarly, if lighting a fire, the leader should be completing the activity with just one child.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

- Each class will be accompanied down to the woodland site each session by the Forest School Leader, their class teacher and teaching assistant.
- Each accompanying adult must read and understand the Forest School handbook and support the Forest School Leader in the running of sessions.
- All staff are to regularly head count children to ensure the children are all present and accounted for. At every Forest School session, there will always

be a minimum of **three** members of staff in attendance. This is inclusive of the Forest School Leader.

- Staff are there to ensure the children keep within the agreed boundaries and to support play and activities alongside the Forest School Leader.
- It is the Forest School Leaders responsibility to ensure the woodland area is safe before entering at the beginning of each session. As the woodland area is public land, the Forest School Leader will perform a dynamic risk assessment on entry at the beginning of every visit. Children and supporting staff are to wait along the boundary footpath and await clear instruction from the Forest School Leader that the site is safe.

Aims of Forest School Sessions at Banstead Preparatory School

- To provide opportunity for individuals to develop, to learn and to enjoy themselves.
- To provide a safe environment in which pupils can take risks.
- To help pupils understand, appreciate and care for the natural environment.
- To develop self-esteem and confidence.
- Provide opportunities to learn through small, achievable tasks.
- To meet the needs of all pupils with all learning styles.
- To develop social and team working skills.
- To enable pupils to be independent, self-motivated and considerate.
- To be true to the Forest School ethos and approach.
- To develop a secure, happy and welcoming environment.
- To provide stimulation and varied learning activities appropriate to the pupil's needs and stages of development.
- To help each pupil build self-esteem, confidence, independence and self-control and interpersonal skills.
- To build on listening skills and turn taking.

Forest School Principles (Forest Schools Association)

The Forest School approach to learning is structured by six key principles. This ensures practitioners who follow the approach are all working to the same values and criteria.

Principle One – Forest School sessions are long term, regular, planned sessions in a woodland environment. Not just one-off sessions; ideally every other week, if not weekly. Preferably taking part through all seasons.

Principle Two – Forest School sessions take place in an outdoor woodland environment. This supports the learner in creating a positive relationship with the natural environment.

Principle Three – Forest School learning promotes the holistic development of the learner and all people involved.

Principle Four – Forest School promotes the ability for learners to take appropriate risks in line with the environment and themselves.

Principle Five – Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, who regularly continue to learn and develop their skills and to reflect on their learning.

Principle six – Forest School promotes learner-centred learning. Sessions should be planned to be available to all and with the focus of the interests and needs of the learner.

Communication with parents, staff and helpers

In order to keep parents, staff and helpers informed of what goes on in Forest School sessions at Banstead Preparatory School the following is in place to ensure good communication:

- A copy of this Handbook will be available on the school website or a hard copy can be produced on request.
- Parents will receive a general information letter before the sessions begin, and details of how we get to the woodland site. On joining Banstead Preparatory School, parents complete an off-site activities permission slip which includes all Forest School sessions.
- There will be opportunities for informal chats with the Forest School Leader before sessions begin, if parents, staff or helpers have any questions or concerns related to Forest School sessions.

- Basic session information will be shared with children and staff prior to the visit; rules will be discussed and practised in the classroom setting and during Forest School sessions.

The Forest School Leader will be responsible for communicating between the Home and School and the Woodland Owners.

Forest School Sessions – code of conduct

In order for all children to stay safe during Forest School sessions, the following rules, procedures and policies have been put in place to ensure children are aware of risks they take.

Walking to and from the site

- All children to wear a yellow high visibility waistcoat in order to be seen by staff at all times and when crossing the road.
- Children are to walk in pairs.
- The Forest School Leader walks at the front of the line in order to check for hazards along the way. One member of staff to walk at the back of the line and another member of staff to be based somewhere in the middle.
- When walking along the public footpaths everyone walks in single file.
- When crossing the road outside school, one member of staff leads the children across the road and the other walks at the back. The Forest School Leader checks that the road is safe and stands in the middle so oncoming vehicles can stop whilst group is crossing the road.
- The Forest School Leader is to regularly complete head counts along the route to ensure children are all together.

Understanding the site boundaries

- At the beginning of each session, the children will be made aware of where in the woodland they can explore and how far they can go.
- If we are unable to see all the children, an adult will shout '1, 2, 3, where are you?' The child should reply '1, 2, 3, I'm here.' And stand still to listen and respond to the verbal instruction. This will have been introduced to through a game and practised many times.

Picking up and playing with sticks

- Children will be allowed to carry sticks shorter than their arm's length but made sure 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

- When risk assessment carried out before session, areas below climbing trees must be checked for sharp objects and the tree checked for loose branches. Children are not to climb higher than an adults arm length or chest height. (This will be taught). Unsafe or tempting trees can be marked with a hazard tape. Children will be taught how to check if branches are safe to climb.

Rope and String Use

- Children will be encouraged to connect and transport materials but prevented from tying up other children or themselves! If a child has a good idea and wants, for example, to try and build a rope swing do help them and use the opportunity to model appropriate knot tying. All string and rope must be collected up at the end of the session.

Carrying and 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 your back straight should be modelled by all adults. Heavier objects will be rolled, dragged or carried by more people.

Eating and Drinking

- Children will be taught not to eat anything found in the woods through 'stop, no pick, no lick'. We will discuss this together so that children are secure in their knowledge. If we take drinks or snacks outside, we will ensure children use wipes to clean their hands before eating their snack or drinking.

Collecting Wood

- Wood can only be collected from the ground. 'stop no pick, no lick'.

Leaving the Site

- At the end of each session, the children take part in a 'leave no trace' tidy up task. If artefacts are made using 'found materials' these may be taken off sight. Shelters should normally be demolished, and imported materials taken back into school at the end of each session. The site must always be left as it is found.

Forest School backpack contents

The following can be found in the Forest School back pack. This should be checked by the Forest School Leader at the beginning and at the end of each session.

- First Aid kit
- Forest School handbook
- Medical information of all in the group
- Risk assessments
- Mobile phone
- Bottle of clean water
- Accident report book
- Individual medication (if required)
- Emergency rescue blanket
- Wet wipes
- Rubbish bags to collect any rubbish found
- Torch

Forest School Resource Toolbox, AKA 'Stanley'

A selection of resources for the children to access independently to support their learning during Forest School sessions can be found in 'Stanley'. The contents should be checked and accounted for at the end of each session to ensure that nothing is left in the woodland before we leave site to return to school. The contents vary from time to time, dependent on activities each term, but general items will remain at all times:

- Bug pots
- Minibeast, leaf and wildlife identification cards
- Magnifying glasses
- Egg boxes
- Sticky strips
- Plastic mirrors
- Clipboards, paper and pencils
- String
- Elastic bands

All following policies and procedures in this handbook follow the requirements for a safe running of Forest Schools. They are in addition to the main Banstead Preparatory School policies and do not replace them. All staff, visitors and volunteers have a duty to follow all policies, procedures and risk assessments when in and around the Forest School areas.

Full copies of policies can be found at:

<https://www.bansteadprep.com/about-our-school/policies>

Emergency Procedures

- Hayley Compton (Forest School leader) has completed a 2-day Paediatric First Aid training course, which includes emergency care.
- The Forest School First Aid Kit is kept in the Forest School Leaders backpack. This is to be checked by the Forest School Leader before every session. Included in this is also an emergency blanket and a bottle of clean fresh water. (See list of contents on page 7 of this handbook).
- All staff to wear a red lanyard which contains details of important telephone numbers and also documents our specific coordinates for where we are on the woodland site, in case of an emergency. This information is also based on the site Risk Assessment which is kept in the Forest School Leader backpack.
- The Forest School mobile phone is kept in the Forest School backpack. This is to be used in an emergency to call for help and also to call the school in case of a serious incident.
- In the event of a serious incident when the Forest School sessions are running the Forest School phone is to be used to call the school office when extra members of staff are required.
- In case of no service on the Forest School mobile phone, one member of staff is to return to the school site to get help.
- The ratio of staff to child should not go above 1:8. When using tools or fire the ratio will be 1:1.

Accident Procedure - If a child becomes injured.

- The Forest School Leader is to assist. In the event that the Forest School Leader is carrying out an activity with another pupil the activity is to stop and the pupil carrying out the activity is to go to another member of staff or take part in a different activity.
- The first aider is to call for help if needed, using the Forest School mobile phone.
- If the accident/injury is serious, recall learners to gather with a member of staff to await instruction from the Forest School Leader.
- The session will have to then be evaluated and all pupils are to be escorted safely back to main school site.

Accident Procedure - If an adult becomes injured

- The Forest School Leader to assist the adult. In the event the Forest School Leader is carrying out an activity with another child the activity is to stop and the child carrying out the activity is to go to another member of staff. The Forest School Leader will assess the injury and administer first aid if required.
- In the case of more serious accidents/injuries, call for help if needed using Forest School mobile phone. One member of staff is recall learners/change to another activity.
- In the event that Hayley Compton (Forest School Leader) is injured the session will have to end. Supporting staff are to use the Forest School mobile phone to get further support from main school.

Missing Child Procedure

All children walk to the woodland area for Forest School sessions and are counted before they enter, when they arrive, during session, before they leave the woodland and when they arrive back to school. Children who are thought to be vulnerable or known to escape will be checked for their position regularly during the session.

Children are instructed to play within the woodland boundary agreed upon on arrival at the beginning of every session. Staff ensure they are supervising and observing where children move to within the designated area of the woodland. All children are to wear yellow hi-visibility jackets in order to be seen at all times. Children are encouraged to play in groups or close by other children and to always be able to see an adult of the BPS team.

If a child becomes lost:

- Register of children attending should be taken at the beginning of each session and is to be kept in the Forest School back pack. In the

event of a child being lost/missing, this register is to be taken to identify which child is lost, if unknown.

- If it is discovered that a child cannot be accounted for, one adult is to gather all remaining children and keep them together whilst the Forest School Leader and one other staff member search the site for the missing child. The entrance by the road is to be the first area checked, followed by the surrounding field area.
- If after 5 minutes the missing child is not found, the Forest School Leader is to use the Forest School Mobile phone to alert the school office of the emergency. Information about the missing child should be given:
 - A description of the child and what that child was wearing. The Forest School Leader is to keep printed photos of the children (not identifiable by name in the back pack to help identify missing child;
 - Last known location of the child and at what time the alert was given;
 - Which areas of the site have been searched;
- At this point, the Forest School Leader will take direction from the duty SLT member as to what to do next.

Please see appendix one for links to full policies

Toileting

- All pupils are to use the toilet before the session starts. If a pupil needs the toilet during a session they are to use the designated toileting area, highlighted to the group at the start of each session.
- Hand wipes and hand sanitizing gel is kept in the Forest School back pack. All rubbish must be bagged up and taken back to the main school site to be disposed of properly.
- Staff must remember to give children privacy and ensure they are not alone with any child whilst toileting during Forest School sessions.

Poor Weather Procedures

Poor weather conditions are described as snow, rain, wind, thunder/lightning storms and heat.

At BPS we believe children should experience learning in their environment not matter what the weather, however we understand that it is our responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children and adults.

It is the responsibility of the Forest School Leader to ensure local weather information is up to date before preparing/leaving the BPS school site. The Forest School Leader is responsible for continuing or deciding to cancel a Forest School session if the weather is poor.

The table below details the procedure and risk assessment undertaken by the Forest School Leader in the event of poor weather conditions:

Weather Condition	Reason to Continue	Reason to Cancel
<i>Snow</i>	Snow has settled and children have arrived prepared for session in snow.	Snow still falling, freezing and slippery conditions. This would have to be really extreme to cancel!
<i>Rain</i>	Light rain, forecast is good.	Heavy rain, forecast to continue, possible flooding.
<i>Wind</i>	Light wind	High wind. Danger of falling branches and trees etc.
<i>Thunder storm and lightning</i>	Low rumbles of thunder heard in the distance. Clear skies.	Rumbles of thunder grow louder. Bolts of lightning visible in the distance.
<i>Heat</i>	Medium heat. Children wearing sun protection. Keep to shaded areas.	Too hot. Risk of sun stroke and heat exhaustion.

Extreme Weather

If weather changes during session, the session is concluded and all children and supporting staff walk back to the BPS site.

Ensure children are correctly dressed for the weather:

Cold weather clothing	Warm/hot weather clothing
Jumper Coat Waterproof jacket Waterproof trousers Socks Wellie boots Woolly hat Scarf Gloves	Long sleeved T-Shirt leggings/jogging bottoms/long trousers Socks Trainers Sun hat/cap Sunscreen

Risk Assessments and Safety Sweeps

Risk assessments are to be carried out for the site itself and for activities undertaken during Forest School sessions. A site safety sweep should take place at the start of each session on arrival to the site, before entering the woodland, by the Forest School Leader. The sweep is to include a walk around the perimeter of the area, litter picked up and a check for any hazardous items/materials potentially left by members of the public. At present, we do not have permission to build campfires or erect tents/shelters. These have been included on our risk assessment in case this is potentially changed in the future. In the future if this changes then the risk assessment is in place to be reviewed and amended accordingly.

The risk assessment process is as follows.

- We look for hazards
- We decide who might be harmed and how this might happen
- We evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done.
- We record our findings
- We review our assessments and revise them if necessary
- We inform all adults accompanying the group.
- We have a copy with us on an observation board.

The risk assessment can be found here: [Forest School Risk Assessment](#)

Insurance

The children Act 2004 and the Health and Safety Work Act 1974 place a number of legal responsibilities on the school. Banstead Preparatory School has insurance cover appropriate to its duties under this legislation, including Employer's and Public Liability Insurance. Responsibility will in most cases rest with the school, but staff will take reasonable care, both for themselves and other people who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work.

Behaviour

During the Forest School sessions pupils need to follow the main school behaviour routines. Pupils will be reminded of the Forest School safety rules and behaviour expectations at the start of each session.

The main safety rules and behaviour expectations are as follows:

- Good listening. (listen when adult is talking)
- Keep in the Forest School boundaries.
- Good Looking. (look around you and take care)
- Keep everyone safe.
- Good waiting. (be patient when waiting for your turn)

If pupils are not following the school behaviour routines:

- Pupils to be reminded of behaviour expected. (verbal warning)
- If behaviour escalates or continues - time out at a magic spot.
- Failing this the pupil is to return to main school site and SLT is to be informed.

Tools and safety

The Forest School Leader is responsible for the safe usage and maintenance of all tools.

- Tools are to be checked at the beginning and end of each session to ensure they are safe to use.
- Tools are to be stored safely in a locked toolbox/bag and accessed only by the Forest School Leader.
- Wellies or sturdy footwear is to be worn by adults and children when in the forest. When using hand tools, appropriate gloves are to be provided for the children to wear to protect them from injury and harm.
- An activity risk assessment for sessions and an overall risk assessment for the general forest area is reviewed and updated every term by the Forest School Leader.
- Tool training and assessment of individuals should always take place prior to working with tools.
- Children are to be reminded of the forest school rules and safety rules at the start of each session.
- All children and staff are to wear the appropriate personal protective equipment associated with the tool work activity, i.e. protective gloves/glasses.
- When using tools, the Forest School leader will work 1-1 with the child.
- When pupils aren't using tools, they should remain a safe distance anyway from the area.

The risk assessment can be found here: [Forest School Risk Assessment](#)

Fire and safety

- Due to site restrictions we currently do not have campfires during Forest School session. It is planned for the future to designate an appropriate area on the main school site for the children to take part in specific campfire sessions.
- We will use a fire pit and create a fire circle.
- The children will be trained and supervised in how to approach and leave before lighting a fire.
- Fires will not be lit in windy or tinder dry conditions.
- We will have at least 1.5m between fire surround and seating logs.
- **We will never leave a fire unattended.**
- We will have water in a bucket available to extinguish the fire
- An overall risk assessment will be compiled when using fire during session, communication with the rest of the school site and maintenance team to ensure everyone is informed of the fire being started. The same communication will be shared once the fire has been extinguished.

The risk assessment can be found here: [Forest School Risk Assessment](#)

Health and Safety

Banstead Preparatory School sets out a clear statement of intent regarding the schools' approach to the health and safety of the children, staff and visitors to the school. The following list is additional measures relating directly to Forest School sessions. This is in addition to the whole school Health and Safety Policy.

1. Regardless of how many adults accompany Forest School sessions, the person in charge is always the Forest School Leader.
2. The Forest School Leader has overall duty of care for the children in his/her charge, but all adults are required to take all reasonable steps to ensure children are safe.
3. All adult helpers must read this handbook and appropriate risk assessments and understand and agree to comply with the general operating procedures for Forest School.
4. The Forest School Leader or assistant will carry a first aid kit and emergency items needed in the Forest School backpack (for contents of the back pack see page 7 of this handbook).

5. The Forest School leader will always carry a mobile phone in order to make contact with the main school site.
6. In the event of an emergency, the Forest School leader will ensure that the school contacts the emergency services.
7. The Forest School leader will review the risk assessments before every trip to the Woodland site.
8. When tools are used the Adult/child ratio will be always be 1:1 There is only one exception to this- the use of potato peelers for stick whittling.

Equality and Inclusion

Banstead Preparatory School is committed to the idea that there should be equal opportunity for all. Our policies help to ensure that we promote the individuality of our children, irrespective of ethnicity, attainment, age, disability, gender or background.

We undertake that all children:

- Feel secure and know that their contributions are valued
- Appreciate and value the differences they see in others.
- Are able to participate safely in clothing that is appropriate to their religious beliefs.
- Are taught in groupings that allow them to experience success
- Use materials that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds
- Have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles
- Are set challenging targets that allow them to succeed
- Participate fully, regardless of disabilities or medical needs.

Safeguarding

Banstead Preparatory School is committed to the safeguarding and promotion of children's welfare. Our policy and procedures comply with the DfE publication Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021) and has regard to DfE 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)', 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2015)' and Prevent Duty Guidance: England and Wales 2015' (updated 2021). They are in accordance with locally (Surrey) agreed interagency procedures. We operate safe recruitment procedures (including DBS checks and compliance with Independent School Standards Regulations), provide the required staff training (currently every two years for designated persons and upon induction and every three years for all staff). We provide an annual safeguarding update for staff and ensure

that all staff, including part-time and voluntary staff, who work with children are made aware of the school's Child Protection Policy and procedures and staff Code of Conduct. This policy is available to all interested parties on the public area of the school website, www.bansteadprep.com, and a hard copy is available on request from the school offices, in line with our Provision of Information policy.

In addition, adults working within Forest School sessions need to appreciate that when children feel comfortable and content, when their instinct to trust and risk take is encouraged, they may be moved to disclose information which they might otherwise keep to themselves. Any volunteer or member of staff who finds that a child is telling them something which concerns them should follow the following steps:

- Listen but ask NO leading questions. Remember that you must not promise to 'keep a secret'.
- The general rule is that adults should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation.
- Comfort the child if appropriate
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible.

Appendix One

Copies of full policies that support this handbook can be found on the school website:

<https://www.bansteadprep.com/about-our-school/policies>

Specific policies that link to this are:

- BPS Child Protection Policy
- BPS Equal Opportunities Policy
- BPS Extreme Weather Policy
- BPS First Aid Policy
- BPS Health and Safety Policy