



AFNORTH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK

2024 - 2025





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AFNORTH International School Forest School Vision



To connect children with nature and for them to experience woodland in a variety of seasons and weather conditions.

To allow them the opportunity to experience risk, challenges and activities in a child-led environment.

To create a community spirit where the children feel confident, free-thinking and a valued member of a team.

To present the children with opportunities to use a range of tools, create their own projects linked to their learning and to set their own goals.

Forest School aims to raise the confidence, self-esteem and emotional intelligence of a child, giving them the skills to become a lifelong learner.



Definition of Forest School

Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children and young people opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland environment.

At Forest School all participants are viewed as:

- equal, unique and valuable
- competent to explore & discover
- entitled to experience appropriate risk and challenge
- entitled to choose, initiate and drive their own learning and development
- entitled to experience regular success
- entitled to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- entitled to develop a strong, positive relationship with their natural world

This learner-centred approach interweaves with the ever-changing moods and marvels, potential and challenges of the natural world through the seasons to fill every Forest School session and programme with discovery and difference. Yet each programme does also share a common set of principles, aimed at ensuring that all learners experience the cumulative and lasting benefits that quality Forest School offers.

Principles of Forest School:

- FS is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
- FS takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- FS uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
- FS aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- FS offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- FS is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.





Forest School Sites

Forest School Area 1 - Woodland Forest Forest School Area 2 - Outdoor Learning EY	Forest School Area 3: Public IVN Garden Forest School Area 4: Brunsummerheide
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The area of forest that the children will be able to use will be dependent on the age of the children, the number of adult helpers, and the agreement between the FS Leader and the children in the initial session.• Children are not to remove any materials from the site unless specified by the FS Leader.• The ratio of adult to children should be no greater than 1:10 for Y4, 5, & 6. For Sunbeams, Reception, Y1 and Y2 the ratio must not exceed 1:8. All adults must have the relevant clearance from their national office before volunteering at FS.• Before the children consume any food they are to be offered antibacterial gel.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Area 1: The site is located outside the perimeter of the athletics track with children allowed to utilise the woodland that surrounds 2 sides of the track bordered by the Heide.• As the woodland area is limited at the school, it is essential for all children to respect the natural materials and to do their utmost to maintain the site.• Area 1: The toilets within the gymnasium block will be available for the children to use during FS sessions. Children in Y4 and above will be allowed to go independently unless stated otherwise by the class teacher or FS Leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visits that leave the school grounds require separate risk assessments.• IVN Garden Web site (no parent permission needed) https://www.ivn.nl/afdeling/brunssum/• Brunsummerheide (parent permission needed) https://www.natuurmonumenten.nl/natuurgebieden/brunsummerheide<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Education guides available



Operating Procedures

Prior to session:

<p>Class teacher requirements</p> <p>The class teacher to ensure that any relevant medical information about the children is to hand.</p> <p>The class teacher to ensure any relevant information is shared (class or check list for accountability).</p> <p>The class teacher will confirm the number of children attending the session.</p> <p>** To create CHECK-LIST for teacher</p>	<p>Forest School Leader requirements</p> <p>The FS Leader will gather the essential equipment: walkie-talkie, GO bag, class list, medications (if applicable), session plan.</p> <p>The FS Leader is to ensure that the GO bag is ready (first aid kit, tissues, hand sanitizer, handbook, bin bag).</p> <p>The FS Leader will assess whether a daily site risk assessment is required.</p> <p>The FS Leader will carry out a check of all tools before use in accordance with the tools procedures in this document.</p> <p>The FS leader will brief any adults on the session plan, relevant risk assessments and the children involved.</p>
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During the session:

- The FS Leader and assisting staff will carry out a dynamic risk assessment of the activities taking place. Whenever possible, they will encourage the children to assess the risk of their activity and for the children to find a solution to any occurring problems.
- The FS Leader will aim to be aware of the location of the students throughout the session.

Post session:

- The FS Leader is responsible for ensuring that all equipment is returned at the end of the session. This includes ropes, tarpaulins, safety and cooking equipment, additionally keeping the table clear, fire is appropriately extinguished.
- The FS Leader will carry out a head count before leaving the site.
- The FS Leader will carry out a review of the session, including debriefing the class teacher where appropriate.
- The FS Leader will check the serviceability of all tools prior to putting them in storage.
- The FS Leader will carry out an evaluation of the session and make the relevant plans for that group's next session.
- The FS Leader will ensure that the GO bag (first aid kit, walkie talkie or phone and other supplies) is replenished.



Guidance for Adult Helpers (Non School Employees)

- Make the FS Leader aware of any medical or other needs you may have..
 - Ensure the safety of the individuals you are working with.
 - Allow the children to judge their own level of risk and assess it accordingly.
 - Assist the child if requested.
 - Allow the child room to make mistakes; this is the best form of learning.
 - Always communicate in a calm manner (unless the safety of the child dictates otherwise).
 - Give the children the space in which to attempt a new skill. This may be the difference between success and failure!
 - Try not to offer solutions, but encourage the child to find the answer that works for them.
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- **Observations:** During sessions, when appropriate, make observations which can be passed on to the FS Leader and/or class teacher. It is **not permitted** to use personal devices to take pictures or make recordings of children.
 - **Behaviour Management:** If an occasion arises where you need to step in, bring the situation to the attention of the FS Leader as soon as possible.
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- Use your vocabulary to extend the child's learning where possible.
 - Above all else, have fun and enjoy!





Tool Policy

The variety of the tools listed in this section of the handbook can all be used with any age group at AFNORTH International School FS. The decision, regarding if and when to do so, will reside with the FS Leader at the point that he feels that the group can be trusted to use the tools safely. The decision to use the tools can only be revoked by the FS Leader.

- All tools are to be kept in a locked cupboard within the school building after use.
- The FS Leader, or assisting staff (when designated by the FS Leader) are responsible for demonstrating the correct use of each tool, including transportation.
- When any tool is in use, it will be within a designated area and under the supervision of the FS Leader or assisting staff under the ratio annotated in the tools procedures.
- Gloves are not to be worn on the hand(s) controlling the tool.
- All serviceability of the tools is the responsibility of the FS Leader.
- Optional - When students are proficient at a certain skill or tool they will receive a passport or certificate

Tools

Tool talk. Whittle a carrot with a peeler. Use secateurs to snip twigs	Tool talk. Whittle carrot with a knife. Use hammer and nails	Tool talk. Whittle a stick - remove bark and point a stick. Cut wooden disc using a bow saw with adult support	Tool talk. Make a simple tent peg. Use loppers to prune bushes and trim sticks.	Tool talk. Use axe to see a mallet being made. Use axe to put point on a stake.	Tool talk. Make mallets. Use bow saws to cut branches. Knife and axe maintenance
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Hand Saw Procedures

Hand saws are used to cut wood that is too large to be cut with loppers.

Hand saws are to be used with a ratio of 1:2.

There are 2 types of hand saw blade:

Peg Tooth - for cutting dead wood

Raker tooth – used for cutting green wood



Safety Checks: (to be carried out by FS Leader prior to session)

- Tightness of blade/cutting teeth are serviceable. * Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion)
- Condition of the handle. * Safety guard is present and serviceable.

Teaching Points:

- FS Leader gives the tool talk before introducing the tool
- The hand saw is to be carried as a suitcase, with the teeth facing behind the carrier.
- When not in use, the protective case is to be fitted.
- If the saw is being passed to another person, the handle is to be offered towards them, not the blade.
- When using the saw a glove must be worn on the non-cutting hand only.
- The level of the sawhorse should allow the user to stand without excessive bending of the back.
- The user's feet must be positioned in a strong stance (boxing style). Right handed users must have their right foot back creating a triangle with the saw.
- The non-cutting hand should be positioned with the metal of the sawhorse between the blade and the hand..
- Use of a partner for large pieces of wood may be appropriate.
- To start cutting, complete three full pull backs of the blade to create a groove.
- The whole blade should be used.
- The blade should be kept level with the floor, not pushing down at the front of the blade and let the blade do the work.
- When nearing the end, do not reach down for the wooden disks before the saw has been removed.
- **Storage: The saw should be maintained by wiping away any debris by pinching away from the blade. Ensuring that the saw is dry, oil is applied before storage.**



Fixed Blade Knife Procedures

Fixed blade knives are to be used to whittling, cutting or carving.

Fixed blade knives are to be used with a ratio of 1:4 (maximum).

Safety Checks: (to be carried out by FS Leader prior to session)

- Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion)
- Security of blade to handle.
- Sharpness of blade.
- Safety guard is serviceable.



Teaching Points:

- FS Leader gives the tool talk before introducing the tool
- The user is to be seated with either both legs turned to the side opposite the knife or open leg stance leaning forward with elbows on knees.
- A firm grip on the handle.
- Straighten the arm holding the blade only ever taking the blade away from the body.
- No-one should be within your safety circle' (complete arms distance plus tool away from the user in all directions)

Storage:

- Remove debris by pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean.
- Sharpen when necessary.
- Must be stored in a lockable container in alarmed premises.



Loppers Procedures

Loppers are to be used for cutting wood that is too large for secateurs and up to approximately the size of an adult thumb.

Loppers are to be used with a ratio of 1:2.

Safety Checks: (to be carried out by FS Leader prior to session)

- Visual inspection for blade sharpness.
- Check the locking bolt is secure.
- Check the security of the grips.
- Whole item BBC (bends breaks and corrosion).

Teaching Points:

- FS Leader to give tool talk before introducing this tool.
- When carrying the loppers, they are to be held against the side of the body with the hand on the lower handle preventing the tool from opening. The blade is to be pointing forward with the bend of the beak down.
- When passing the loppers, they are to be offered handle first.
- Stand in a strong position; feet shoulder width apart and one foot slightly forward.
- No-one should be within your safety circle (complete arms distance plus tool away from the user in all directions).

Storage:

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean.
- Must be stored in a lockable containers.





Secateurs Procedures

Secateurs are to be used for cutting wood that is up to approximately the size of an adult little finger.

Loppers are to be used with a ratio of 1:2.

Safety Checks: (to be carried out by FS leader prior to session)

- Visual inspection for blade sharpness.
- Check the safety catch is serviceable.
- Check the security of the grips.
- Whole item BBC (bends breaks and corrosion).



Teaching Points:

- FS Leader to do a tool talk before introducing this tool.
- When passing the secateurs, they are to be offered handle first.
- When cutting, ensure the blade is being pointed away from the body.
- No-one should be within your safety circle' (complete arms distance plus tool away from the user in all directions).

Storage:

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean and dry.
- Must be stored in a lockable container.



Pruning Saw Procedures

Pruning saws are used for cutting wood that is too large for loppers but require more maneuverability than a hand saw.

Pruning saws should be used with a ratio of 1:2.

Safety Checks: (to be carried out by FS Leader prior to session)

- Open the blade and inspect for sharpness.
- Check the security of the handle and the safety catch.
- Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion).



Teaching Points:

- FS Leader to give tool talk before introducing this tool.
- When passing the pruning saw, they are to be offered handle first.
- When opening the saw, open away from the body.
- Stand in a strong, well balance position.
- To begin cutting, draw the blade backwards three times to create the cutting line.
- Use the whole of the blade.
- No-one should be within your safety circle (complete arms distance plus tool away from the user in all directions).
- When closing the blade, ensure the blade is away from the body.

Storage:

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean and dry and apply a light oiling with a rag.
- Must be stored in a lockable container.



Electric drill/Hand Drill Procedures

The drill is to be used to make holes in wood.

The drill is to be used with a ratio of 1:2.

Safety Checks: (to be carried out by FS leader prior to session)

- Ensure the drill bits are the correct type for the drill.
- Ensure the battery is charged.
- Check the security of the handle.
- Check the working parts are serviceable.
- Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion).

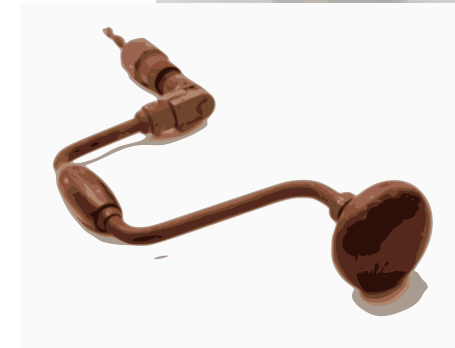


Teaching Points:

- FS Leader to give tool talk before introducing this tool
- When passing the drill, they are to be offered handle first.
- Stand in a strong, well balance position.
- Ensure the drill bit is secure in the drill.
- To begin drilling, lean over the drill to use body weight.
- Ensure the wood is secure.

Storage:

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the drill bit.
- Wipe clean and dry.
- The drill and bits are to be stored separately.





Bill Hook and Axe Procedures

The billhook/axe is to be used to chop or split wood.

The billhook/axe is to be used with a ratio of 1:1.

These tools are used in accordance with the AFNORTH Forest Schools Skills Progression.



Safety Checks: (to be carried out by FS Leader prior to session)

- Ensure the security of the handle and there are no splinters.
- Check the security of the blade and that the eye is fitted correctly.
- Check the blade for sharpness.
- Whole item BBC (bends, breaks and corrosion).

Teaching Points:

- FS Leader to give tool talk before introducing this tool.
- When passing, it is to be offered handle first.
- Stand in a strong, well balanced position.
- Ensure its handle is secured in the hand but with a relaxed hold to allow the wrist to flex without the upper arm taking all the work.
- Ensure the wood is secure on a tree stump which is level and secure before chopping.
- When used for splitting wood using a mallet, eye contact must be made between the individuals before striking.

Storage:

- Remove debris by brushing/pinching away from the blade.
- Wipe clean and dry.
- Sharpen when needed.



Fire Safety Policy and Procedures

Policy: The introduction of fire into any Forest School session will be at the discretion of the FS Leader only. It will be planned to introduce fire lighting to the groups, but this can be withdrawn at any point if the FS Leader deems it to be unsafe.

Procedures:

The following points must be adhered to before introducing fire and in every lesson with a fire:

- All the children have shown the correct behaviour in relation to the fire pit (see paragraph below).
- The fire pit is positioned correctly, with no danger of spreading.
- The appropriate equipment is in place. (water and first aid kit, including plunge bucket and towel)
- There is enough fuel to burn for the intended time.
- The correct way to approach a fire is from low down in a secure stance.
- When approaching the fire, the individual is not to wear gloves; the naked hand should be free to feel the heat.
- When extinguishing the fire, the children are to be made aware of the risk of steam burns.



The seating is to be no closer than 1.5m from the fire surround. When children need to move around the fire, they are to step out of the circle, walk around the outside and step back in a controlled fashion. There is to be absolutely no running within the fire area.

The fire is to be attended by the FS Leader at all times.

At the end of the fire, the ashes are to be spread out, and water applied via a watering can until the ashes are cool. This can be checked by holding the back of a hand over the ashes to check for any residual heat. The heat of the ground beneath the fire must also be checked before leaving the site.














When constructing the fire, there are three sizes of timber required:

1. The thickness of a piece of string.
2. The thickness of a pencil.
3. The thickness of a thumb.

Fires are not to be lit in either very dry or windy conditions. See Beaufort Scale on the next page.



BEAUFORT WIND SCALE

Beaufort Number	Description	Wind speed	Wave height	Sea conditions	Land conditions	
0	Calm	< 1 knot < 1 mph < 2 km/h	0 ft 0 m	Sea like a mirror	Smoke rises vertically	
1	Light air	1–3 knots 1–3 mph 2–5 km/h	0–1 ft 0–0.3 m	Ripples	Direction shown by smoke drift	
2	Light breeze	4–6 knots 4–7 mph 6–11 km/h	1–2 ft 0.3–0.6 m	Small wavelets	Wind felt on face	
3	Gentle breeze	7–10 knots 8–12 mph 12–19 km/h	2–4 ft 0.6–1.2 m	Large wavelets	Leaves and small twigs in constant motion	
4	Moderate breeze	11–16 knots 13–18 mph 20–28 km/h	3.5–6 ft 1–2 m	Small waves	Raises dust and loose paper	
5	Fresh breeze	17–21 knots 19–24 mph 29–38 km/h	6–10 ft 2–3 m	Moderate waves	Small trees and leaves begin to sway	
6	Strong breeze	22–27 knots 25–31 mph 39–49 km/h	9–13 ft 3–4 m	Large waves	Large branches in motion	
7	High wind, moderate gale, near gale	28–33 knots 32–38 mph 50–61 km/h	13–19 ft 4–5.5 m	Sea heaps up	Whole trees in motion	
8	Gale, fresh gale	34–40 knots 39–46 mph 62–74 km/h	18–25 ft 5.5–7.5 m	Moderately high waves	Twigs break off trees	
9	Strong/severe gale	41–47 knots 47–54 mph 75–88 km/h	23–32 ft 7–10 m	High waves	Slight structural damage	
10	Storm, whole gale	48–55 knots 55–63 mph 89–102 km/h	29–41 ft 9–12.5 m	Very high waves	Trees uprooted, considerable structural damage	
11	Violent storm	56–63 knots 64–72 mph 103–117 km/h	37–52 ft 11.5–16 m	Exceptionally high waves	Widespread damage	
12	Hurricane force	≥ 64 knots ≥ 73 mph ≥ 118 km/h	≥ 46 ft ≥ 14 m	Exceptionally high waves, sea is completely white	Devastation	



Health and Safety Policy

The FS leader is responsible for the health and safety of each FS session. The following points must be adhered to at all times:

- All FS sessions are to be run by a Level 3 Forest School Leader or Forest School Leader in training.
- Every adult helper assisting must understand that they are to take all reasonable measures to safeguard each child. All relevant clearance paperwork must be completed by their national office before they can volunteer within FS.
- The FS Leader must ensure the presence of the emergency bag (Go Bag) at every session. The bag must contain:
 - First Aid Kit *Mobile Phone or Walkie Talkie (with communications to the School)
 - Fresh water *Forest School Handbook
 - Any relevant medication for individuals (according to the national Section's policy)
- In an emergency situation, the FS Leader is to contact the relevant section's office immediately by walkie-talkie or phone (British- 045 5278241) (Canadian - 0455278391). If the FS leader is injured, this responsibility is to be carried out by the adult helper. Any remaining adult helpers are to control the group and administer first aid where necessary.
- Risk assessments are to be completed annually. A daily risk assessment is to be carried out at the beginning of each day of forest school if there have been extreme weather conditions dictating a potential change in the makeup of the FS site.
- Any activity planned within forest school must have a risk assessment form. For activities that occur spontaneously and are not risk assessed, the FS leader is to carry out a visual risk assessment and make the decision whether the activity is to continue. If it does, a full risk assessment form should be completed and filed at the earliest opportunity after the session.
- In the event of adverse weather conditions, the FS leader will decide whether or not the session should proceed (high winds that could cause timber to fall from trees or a forecast of lightning) level 6 Beaufort Scale.
- All parents will be informed that their children will be participating in FS and will be requested to send their child with the relevant clothing.
- Any photographs taken during FS will only be used within the confines of the school.
- In the event of a lost child, the remaining children will be used to assist with finding the child. If this cannot be achieved within 10 minutes, the FS leader is to contact the section office to inform them of the situation. They will in turn contact the school guard force to ensure that the perimeter of the school is secure. At this point, the group is to be returned to class, and the remaining staff will assist in locating the lost child.



Health and Safety Procedures

In the event of an emergency, the FS Leader will make contact with the British or Canadian Office to call the emergency services if required. The other adults will take control of the remainder of the group and escort them back to their classroom unless required for any duties delegated by the FS Leader.

The following points may be used as a guide, but are no means a 'one size fits all' strategy:

- Assess the extent of the emergency. Decide whether to carry out emergency first aid or contact local emergency services.
- Where possible remove any others from potential danger either by removing the group or dealing with the hazard.
- Utilise any adult helper(s) to deal with either the situation or the remainder of the group.
- Contact the British or Canadian Office if the time and situation permits. The office will take the necessary steps.
- Carry out appropriate first aid.
- Where necessary, contact the school nurses to assist.
- Return the remaining children to their class.
- Record all the details of the event and ensure all relevant paperwork is completed in accordance with the Accident and Emergency Policy found in the National Section office of the Elementary School.



Safeguarding and Equal Opportunities Policy

It is the policy of AFNORTH International School Forest School to include all individuals whilst respecting the wide range of cultures at the school. All children are to be allowed access to the Forest School sessions with parental consent.

Safeguarding and Equal Opportunities Procedures

All safeguarding issues are to follow school procedures that can be found within the relevant section office of the Elementary School.

Concerns

Any concerns made with regards to the FS are to be made to the principal of the relevant elementary section (British 045 526 8241, Canadian 0455278391).



Risk Assessments

Please find an updated copy of the following on the AIS (AFNORTH International School) common drive

1. Tools and Safety
2. Ropes, Tarpaulins and Den Building
3. Fires and Cooking
4. Fire in Dry Weather
5. Trees
6. COVID 19
7. Visit IVN Gardens
8. General Use of the Forest School Environment
9. Dynamic Risk

