

Forest School Handbook

Above & Beyond - *Developing Potential*



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Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to Above & Beyond – Developing Potential’s Forest School.

Above and Beyond are a Community Interest Company, a CIC fits between a Business and a Charity. Although we do need to make money and cover costs, we also like to support the communities we work by giving a little back.

Forest School is only one part of our organisation, we work with Young People in a variety of settings from the woods to the streets, in classroom or café and a variety of ways which include mentoring, advice, guidance, access to qualifications, post 16 pathways, peer mentoring projects.

Above & Beyond is owned by Colin and Andrew who have worked in Youth & Community for over 60 years combined. Colin and Andrew are the CIC Directors.

We have a very specific logo that was designed by the founding Directors in April 2016 during a long meeting where many concepts were pondered over.



Our Beliefs and Values

Our logo design also represents some of our beliefs and values

- We go Above & Beyond, we go that extra mile to enable the young people and communities we work with to learn, gain skills and acquire knowledge.
- We want all the people we work with to develop their potential and set off on the journey to reach their potential.
- We work with all members of the community.

Beyond our logo we also believe that

- The relationship between young people and youth worker is voluntary
- The starting point for our work is where the young person is at
- We show respect to the young people we work with
- Our engagement is about education and learning, new skills and knowledge
- Enabling young people to understand their own identity

All policies and procedures within the hand book are an extension or in conjunction with A&B's existing policies which are all available in the Staff area of our website.

What is Forest School?

Background

Forest Schools in the United Kingdom have been adapted from a Scandinavian approach to learning. They originated in Sweden in the 1950s and first came to the UK in the mid-1990s when a group from Bridgwater College in Somerset visited Denmark and witnessed children playing outside, leading their own activities, cooking on open fires, climbing and using tools. They were inspired by what they saw and started to run their own Forest School sessions in the UK. Since then, Forest Schools have become increasingly popular across the country.

6 Key principles of Forest School

1. "Forest school is a long term, repetitive learning process that uses a natural outdoor space"
2. "Forest School empowers children and young people to take responsibility for their own learning and development"
3. "Forest School promotes holistic, individualised learning and development"
4. "Forest School encourages emotional growth, self-esteem, confidence and independence"
5. "Forest School is facilitated by qualified Level 3 Forest school Practitioners"
6. "Forest School instils a deep respect and awareness for the natural world and reconnects participants to their environment"

Our Forest School

Our School operates several times a week and in a variety of settings across Charnwood and North West Leicestershire.

Please ask for flyers with Venues and Time.

Our Main base of operations is St Joseph's Tea Room near Oaks in Charnwood.

Age Ranges

0 to 8th Birthday, need to bring a grown up with them. This is because we are not Ofsted registered and as a CIC it is something we do wish to do any time soon.

Over 8's if there are confident enough to stay without a parent or carer, we will be happy with this arrangement.

Our Forest School is proud with the Family involvement we have created, we would love to see that continue.

Staff & Volunteers you may meet

Colin	Director Level 3 Forest School Leader (Qualification Pending) Level 2 Activity First Aid Level 6 Qualification in Community and Youth Work Archery GB Instructor Designated Safeguarding Lead
Owen	Volunteer Working towards his ASDAN Volunteering Award
Joe	Volunteer & Trustee Level 3 Forest School Leader (Qualification Pending) Level 2 Activity First Aid Level 6 Qualification in Community and Youth Work
Andrew	Director First Aid at Work (Qualification Pending) Level 6 Qualification in Community and Youth Work Designated Safeguarding Lead
Jessica	Volunteer Archery GB Instructor
Jenny	Company Secretary Level 3 Qualification in Youth Work

Leader Responsibilities

Review and update relevant policies and the handbook when necessary

Carrying out an on-the-day risk assessment of the site and safety sweep

Planning activities for each session and a risk assessment for those activities

Leading the session

Carrying a mobile phone

Ensuring there is a qualified first-aider on site

Care and maintenance of tools and supervision of their use

Liaising with school group leaders

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Our Forest School Code of Conduct

- We always try to be kind to each other and look after each other
- We always listen to the each other
- We look after our tools and equipment
- We look after plants and animals
- We are sensible with tools and fire and follow the rules carefully
- We look after ourselves and clean our hands after touching plants or animals, after going to the toilet or before having our snack
- We don't pick any plants or flowers unless we are told we can
- We don't put anything in our mouths
- We are careful when we play with sticks
- We always come back when we hear "1, 2, 3 Where are you?" and we answer with "1, 2, 3 I'm here"
- If the whistle is blown three times, there is a reason and everyone must gather together at the camp fire circle
- We never wander off by ourselves

Boundaries

Boundaries will be clearly stated at the start of each session.

If the children are partaking in activities outside of the boundary area with an adult they should be reminded that they should stay within site.

Toileting

Some of our sites have access to a toilet, some do not.

Where there are no toilet facilities available, Above & Beyond provide an Elsan Toilet, inside a Toilet Tent.

Anti-Bacterial Gel is available at all sessions.

Ecological Impact

Whilst using the Forest School sites we shall try and minimise the impact made to Flora and Fauna.

The site may also incur a higher level of erosion due to increased use.

During the Forest School sessions, Participants are encouraged to be more responsible for the protection of Flora and Fauna.

We shall also work to improve the site by adding bug hotels and hedgehog houses to encourage further wildlife.

We shall abide by the Countryside Code as well as the Forest School Code of Conduct.

An **Ecological Impact Matrix** is available to enable a better understanding, please speak to a Director if you would like to see a copy.

The Countryside Code

There are five sections of The Countryside Code dedicated to helping us learn how to respect, protect and enjoy the countryside:

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs;
- Leave gates and property as you find them;
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home;
- Keep dogs under close control; and
- Consider other people.

Activities for Forest Schools

Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous but it should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas.

Some activities might include:

- Shelter building
- Fire lighting
- Tool use
- Studying wildlife
- Playing team and group games
- Sensory activities
- Tracking games
- Cooking on an open fire
- Using a Kelly Kettle
- Rope and string work
- Art and sculpture work
- Woodland and traditional craft
- Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters
- Physical movement activities

Forest School Clothing

Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless the safety of the participants is in question, due to high winds or icy roads.

‘There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing’

Suitable clothing is essential for everyone participating; we need to be adequately dressed to gain the full learning potential of the session.

During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc. are required.

Parental Consent

A consent form for Forest School Participation will be obtained at the first session a child/family attends.

A supply of these form are with registers and accident forms in the issued Really Useful Box.

One form per family or Young Person,

Media Consent is requested on the above mention form. A&B like to record the amazing work they do. We publish photos and video in our Facebook Group. This is a closed group and as Parent/Carer we actively encourage you to request to join to see the amazing things we get up to.

Health and Safety

For Forest Schools to run safely, the Forest School Leader will:

- Ensure that at least one qualified first aider is on site at all times
- Establish and maintain a safe and healthy environment
- Follow policy and practice found in the Staff & Volunteer area of our website
- Make sure all adults on site have knowledge of all guidelines
- Ensure that all adults are familiar with all emergency procedures, reporting and recording
- Make and share risk assessments before sessions
- Ensure that volunteers are aware of their responsibilities towards the children
- Fully investigate any accidents and use information for future risk assessments
- Make sure all equipment is in good working order
- The Forest School Leader is responsible for the maintenance of the first aid kits and any tools that are used on site.

Participants responsibility for Health and Safety

All participants will be responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care of themselves and others
- Co-operating with Forest School leader and any other staff and volunteers on site
- Using equipment in the way they have been instructed
- Remembering to use personal protective equipment provided when needed
- Dressing appropriately for weather conditions and safety
- Abiding by all safety requirements when using a fire pit
- Reporting to the Forest School Leader or staff member of anything they think could be harmful or dangerous on site

Risk Management Policy

Above & Beyond aims to develop Participants self-esteem, independence and motivation to learn in a safe environment. In order that these aims can be met, the Forest School Leader will:

- Consistently apply the 5 step approach to risk assessment for all Forest School activities:
 - Look out for hazards
 - Decide who may be harmed and how
 - Evaluate the risks and decide whether existing controls are adequate or whether more should be done
 - Record findings, including daily amendments to standing risk assessments based on site visits and observations
 - Review assessments on a regular basis (or if circumstances change, which may affect the rigour of the assessment) and revise if necessary
- Carry out site risk assessments on each site where the activities will take place on a seasonal basis
- Pre Session checks will be carried out by the Forest School Leader on sites to be used prior to a day's activities, as near to the start of the activity as is reasonably practicable.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers have read the relevant Site and Activity risk assessments prior to the session.
- Stop activities, if in the opinion of the Forest School Leader, weather conditions such as high winds or the threat of electrical storms make practice unsafe.
- Inform staff, volunteers and Participants of potential hazards and methods of working in order to minimise their risk further

- Involve staff, volunteers and participants in risk assessment, as appropriate, as part of learning.
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and participants are aware of the emergency procedures for the Forest School site.
- Be responsible for teaching participants adequate skills in order to keep themselves safe, particularly in relation to the use of hand tools and fire.
- Ensure all Staff, Volunteers and Participants will have access to drinking water during sessions.
- Ensure a nil-by-mouth policy is adopted in all Forest School sessions – except for food cooked as part of a fully risk assessed Forest School activity.

First Aid

The Forest School Leader is responsible for First Aid and needs to be qualified to at least a two-day first aid course

An emergency kit is taken to all Forest sessions. This contains:

Medical Emergency Procedures (laminated)
 Whistle
 First Aid Kit
 Thermal Blanket/Survival Bag
 Toilet paper in plastic bag
 Baby wipes
 Chocolate and fresh bottled drinking water
 Cotton wool pads in a sealed container
 Clingfilm
 Small ground sheet
 Bite and Sting Relief Spray
 Burn relief spray
 High Vis vest
 Spare socks, hats and gloves (size appropriate)

First Aid Kit checklist:

4 eye irrigation solution sachets
 20 x saline cleansing wipes
 2 instant ice packs
 5 large plasters/10 medium plasters/15 small plasters
 2 triangle bandages
 2 large bandages
 1x resuscitation face shield
 2 medium bandages
 3 pairs of protective gloves/1 roll of micropore tape
 Safety pins

Accident and Emergency Procedure

All staff, volunteers and participants will be briefed on what to do in the case of an emergency. A whistle will be blown as a signal to stop what you are doing, gather with a member of staff, be silent and wait for instructions. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure the rest of the group are safe from danger and adequately supervised. An accident form will be completed later.

In the event of an injury:

If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by first aid on site and requires medical assistance:

- In serious cases, the Emergency Services will be contacted (see below) using the emergency phone carried by the Forest School Leader. A Director will be responsible for contacting the injured party's emergency contact.
- The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety
- One member of staff will meet the ambulance at the site entrance and direct the crew to the incident site.
- If the injured party is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them and the injured party's emergency contact will be updated about the situation by a Director, if parent/carer is a participant they should go with the injured party
- In minor cases, the Forest School Leader will arrange to contact the injured party's emergency contact so that they can be collected and taken to hospital, doctor or home – as appropriate.

Dangerous Occurrence

Please record any accident, incident or near miss incident at the Forest School site on the accident forms in the issued Really Useful Box. Any used forms should be passed to a director as soon as possible

Tool Policy

A&B Forest School uses the following tools with Participants:

- Bow saw
- Billhook
- Sheath knife
- Loppers
- Hand drill & bits

Tools are used with adult supervision only.

The Forest School Leader is responsible for overseeing safe use and maintenance of all tools.

The Forest School staff are responsible for Tool Talks

The Designated Tool Box, is a large black plastic box is where the tools should be kept when no in use.

Camp Fire Safety Policy

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and are used in many sessions. A&B aims to ensure that all participants in sessions with fires, will do so safely and with as little risk to their health and safety as possible.

Location

Only the camp fire area or fire pits will be used for campfires. The area will always be kept clear of low branches.

Campfire area is enclosed by logs to make a firepit to prevent the spread of fire

At some sessions, the fire pit and circle will be an actual fir pit with bench to sit on

Positioning of Participants

Fire areas are surrounded by seating logs or Benches at least 2 metres from the firepit. Exit paths are available at each corner.

In some locations, we have a fire pit experience but we do not light the fire. We aim more to ensure that participants learn the process of how to behave around a fire pit.

When the campfire is in use, participants are not permitted to cross the area immediately surrounding the fire without permission.

Once seated around the campfire, remain seated and wait to be directed by an FS Leader.

Long sleeves and trousers must always be worn.

No one is permitted to throw anything onto the fire.

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.

Fire Lighting

Training has been provided to the Forest School Leader regarding the correct way to construct and light a fire

Safety and Responsibility

- A Fire Blanket, bucket of water and Burns kit must be sited close to the camp.
- Fires are lit using a Flint and Steel to paper and natural tinder. Cotton wool, tinder nests and waterproof matches may be used in extremely wet conditions.
- Sticks/wood must be placed, not thrown, from the side of the fire. The hand should never go near the fire
- When there is a flame the red fire-retardant gloves need to be worn when managing the fire

Extinguishing

- All fires must be extinguished at the end of a session
- Whenever possible, all fuels should be burnt off to ash
- The Forest School Leader should ensure that any large remains of wood, especially when using logs, are separated from one another
- At the end of the session, the fire must be doused down with water
- Large build ups of potash, from several fires, need to be dispersed. This must only be done when it has totally cooled, preferably the following day. It should be finely scattered through the woodland to enable natural decomposition.

Food Hygiene

A&B maintains high food hygiene standards in relation to the purchase, storage, preparation and serving of food.

- Cooking on a campfire will be undertaken only with a member of staff in possession of a Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate
- Food/ingredients will be stored at correct temperatures prior to the session and checked to ensure they are in date and not subject to any contamination by pests, mould etc. A cool box will be used to transport and store any ingredients requiring refrigeration prior to use at the Forest School site. All such ingredients must be used within 2 hours.
- Unrefrigerated food will be served to children within 4 hours of preparation
- All utensils, crockery etc will be checked to ensure they are clean before use.
- Waste food will be disposed of promptly – please refer to the Waste Management Policy
- When food items are to be consumed during a session, Anti-bacterial gel needs to be available
- All medical records must be checked to ensure that no food item or ingredient is given to anyone with an.
- Cooked food will not be reheated.

Campfire Cooking Policy

Cooking on the campfire will only be undertaken with a member of staff in possession of a Level 2 Food Hygiene Certificate.

The Food Hygiene policy will be followed when cooking on a campfire.

All hair will be tied back and loose clothing secured prior to cooking on a campfire.

Equal Opportunities

Please also see A&B's **Equality and diversity policy statement**, this is available in the staff area of our website

Principles of Equal Opportunity in Forest School:

- Discrimination is unacceptable
- Each child and teacher will endeavour to personally contribute towards a happy, caring environment by showing respect for each other and the environment
- Forest School is committed to emphasising the common elements and values of our multiple cultures rather than highlighting conflicting areas
- Forest School will encourage involvement of the wider community in developing equal opportunities education
- Contribute towards raising self-esteem of all
- Allow access for all children to all aspects of the curriculum
- Challenge negative stereotypes
- Promote positive attitudes
-

Our Forest School ethos aims to support the idea of equality of opportunity for all participants by;

- The day to day organisation
- Valuing the expectations that participants bring with them
- Applying the Code of Conduct with fairness and consistency to all

Daily Operating Procedure

Before the session

- A session plan will be devised, considering observations, interest areas and learning points from the previous sessions.
- Activity risk assessment forms will be updated for each planned activity.
- All staff will have read the latest Site Risk Assessment, which will be relevant to the current season
- The Forest School Leader will check weather conditions allow the session to take place.
- A daily dynamic risk assessment completed as a walk around the site and any dangers need to be dealt with.
- The equipment required for the session will be assembled, and load into the trailer

During the session

- Risks will be continually assessed and appropriate action taken to reduce or remove and risks found

After the session

- If the Tool Bag and/or Tool Box have been taken to the site, the contents will be checked by the Forest School leader to ensure that no items are missing
- After the children have left the Forest School room, the Forest School leader will return the penknife to the Tool Box and clean, check and maintain tools, as required. The Tool Box will then be locked.
- A session Intervention Record needs to be completed by the Forest School Team, at the end of the session

Safeguarding Children Policy

The full policy can be download from the staff area of our website

Statement of Policy

- This document states our policy on preventing and reducing harm to children and vulnerable adults when they are in contact with our staff and volunteers.
- The policy aims to:
- Promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults;
- Provide assurance to parents, carers and other parties that Above & Beyond takes reasonable steps to manage risks and keep children and vulnerable adults safe;
- Ensure that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with the necessary information, training and support on safeguarding matters;
- Prevent the employment of individuals in work with children and/or vulnerable adults where they have been barred by the DBS or are deemed by the University to pose an unacceptable risk to vulnerable groups;
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken in the event of any allegations or suspicions regarding harm to children or vulnerable adults arising from contact with Above & Beyond staff and volunteers, wherever the harm takes place.

The Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy also seeks to manage effectively the risks associated with activities and events involving children and vulnerable adults through their contact with Above & Beyond.

- Completing a risk assessment process which involves identifying risks and means of reducing or eliminating these;
- Implementing the required actions identified by the risk assessment process and reviewing the effectiveness of these on a regular basis;
- Ensuring that the appropriate DBS or basic disclosure checks are conducted, for any individuals whose work involves working with children or vulnerable adults;
- Requiring new employees and volunteers involved in working with children or vulnerable adults to familiarise themselves with the content of this policy and the associated Code of Practice.

This policy requires that any suspicions and allegations involving harm to children and vulnerable adults are referred to a Director to determine what action, if any, must be taken. This will enable each situation to be investigated thoroughly, whilst treating the parties involved fairly and with sensitivity. It will also ensure that suitable steps are taken as a result of any investigations, which may include contacting the police and/or fulfilling the legal duty to refer information to the DBS as required.

The procedure for managing suspicions and allegations aims to strike a balance between the need to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and the need to protect staff and volunteers from false or unfounded accusations.

The Children and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding Policy should be used as the basis for all our staff and volunteers, approach to preventing and reducing harm to children and vulnerable adults.

Confidentiality Policy

The full policy can be download from the staff area of our website

CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION POLICY

A&B is committed to providing a safe environment for young people, staff and volunteers.

A&B recognises that a professional relationship of trust is the foundation essential for good youth work. Maintaining confidentiality is an integral part of building trust between young people, staff, volunteers and the organisation and will be respected always, apart from where it conflicts with reporting safeguarding concerns.

In addition, the Data Protection Act places an obligation on all organisations to implement the eight guiding principles when obtaining, handling and storing personal information

Complaints Procedure

The full policy can be download from www.aboveandbeyondcic.org/about

Complaints Management Procedure – August 2016

Above and Beyond – Developing Potential CIC views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person [or organisation] that has made the complaint.

Other Policies & Procedures

All our up-to-date policies, procedures, forms & risk assessments can be found in our Staff Area on our website, this is of course only available to staff, however if a participant requires a copy please let us know we are happy to share.