



The Forest Folk

Handbook

2026



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1 Welcome & Ethos

Welcome

Welcome to The Forest Folk CIC!

We're glad you're here.

This handbook explains how our Forest School runs day to day. It sets out what we value, how we work, and what adults can expect when they step into a session with us.

Forest School, for us, isn't an outdoor lesson or a one-off experience. It's a long-term, relational process. It unfolds slowly through regular time in natural spaces, shared experiences, and steady, consistent adults.

We prioritise emotional safety, connection, curiosity, and supported risk. Growth doesn't happen on command. It happens when people feel safe enough to explore.

This handbook gives you the practical picture. The detailed procedures sit in the Policies & Procedures Booklet.

About The Forest Folk CIC

The Forest Folk CIC is a social enterprise providing Forest School and outdoor enrichment for children and young people, particularly those with social, emotional, and mental health needs.

Our work centres around:

- Emotional regulation and wellbeing
- Building relationships through shared experience
- Supporting confidence and self-understanding
- Creating inclusive, trauma-aware environments

We work alongside schools, alternative provisions, families, and community partners. Many of the children and young people we support have found traditional settings difficult. Forest School offers a different pace, a different environment, and often, a different starting point.

As a social enterprise, our decisions are guided by participant need, integrity of practice, and care for the communities and environments we work within. Profit is not the purpose. Impact is.

Our Approach

Our practice is shaped by:

- The Forest School Association's six principles



- Current understanding of child development, attachment, and trauma
- Reflective, relational leadership
- Deep respect for the natural world

Sessions are participant-centred. That means children and young people are supported to:

- Follow their interests
- Explore at their own pace
- Make decisions
- Build relationships with peers, adults, and place

Adults are facilitators, creating the conditions for growth. We observe carefully, offer support sparingly (where it's needed), and we step in when safety, inclusion, or wellbeing requires it.

Forest School Principles

Our work is grounded in the six core principles outlined by the Forest School Association.

The Long-Term Principle

The participants we work with often experience sharp changes in circumstance and losses in relationship throughout their educational life. We've seen that through long-term, regular sessions, participants are given the time to develop trust and deepen relationships. It allows for their learning to emerge naturally, informed by the ongoing planning, observation, and reflection of the Leaders.

The Nature Principle

Being in nature has proven positive psychological and biological effects on humans, from supporting wellbeing and sensory regulation to the development of a meaningful relationship with the natural world. This is especially important for our participants who may either come from areas that are nature-deprived or have developed coping strategies and habits that involve a dominance of screen time. Wherever possible our sessions take place in woodland or natural outdoor environments, through all seasons and in all weathers (apart from the most extreme!).

The Holistic Learning Principle

Humans are not compartmentalised organisms, and neither should their development be. Our participants can often experience development only in a few aspects and therefore require support in other areas. Our Forest School sessions support the development of the whole person, that is, their social, physical, intellectual, communicative, emotional, and spiritual aspects. We know that learning is not linear, and progress may be uneven or unpredictable, but we plan for this and actively encourage it.

The Risk Principle



Children need contact with the ecosystem they are in for their bodies to develop the appropriate healing and immunity strategies. They need to learn about what their own bodies are capable of, to develop their proprioceptive and vestibular senses. This is why we offer opportunities for supported risk-taking, not removing risk but managing it through a clear risk-benefit approach. This allows our participants to develop judgement, confidence, and self-awareness, as well as relish the simple joy of succeeding in doing something (relatively) dangerous.

The Leadership Principle

Participants are not the only learners in our sessions. Our Forest School Leaders are lifelong learners who, alongside reflection on participants' development, constantly reflect on their own. In practice, this means that Leaders engage in CPD and apply curiosity to their delivery, approaches, and assumptions. All Leaders engage in supervision that supports this self and professional reflection.

The Community Principle

The need for social contact is something baked into humans. Some of our participants have experienced relationships that make this a threat and could lead them to live isolated lives. Yet the holistic benefits of being in a community are manifold, particularly for wellbeing and learning. Our Forest School groups are not just individuals attending sessions, but micro-communities that form through shared experiences, mutual respect, and collaboration.

Our Values

Across everything we do, we aim to be:

- Calm – prioritising emotional safety and steady adult presence
- Curious – staying open, reflective, and responsive
- Connected – building trusting and respectful relationships

These values aren't slogans. They should be noticeable in how sessions feel. If someone visited for ten minutes, they should sense it.

Essential Information

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Artemis Artemiou

Phone: 07942 911110

Email: arte@theforestfolkic.co.uk

Safeguarding procedures are outlined in Section 3: Safeguarding & Welfare.



2 Roles & Responsibilities

Governance

The Forest Folk CIC is a social enterprise with clear leadership and lines of responsibility:

- Overall organisational responsibility sits with the Director.
- Operational responsibility during sessions sits with the Forest School Leader.

Clear leadership isn't about hierarchy, it's about safety. Everyone should know who is responsible for what, and who makes decisions when it matters.

Director Responsibilities

The Director holds overall responsibility for:

- Strategic direction
- Legal compliance
- Financial oversight
- Safeguarding accountability
- Quality assurance

The Director ensures that policies are in place, reviewed, and followed, and that the organisation operates safely, ethically, and in line with its stated values.

Where concerns arise about practice, governance, or conduct, they may be raised directly with the Director.

Forest School Leader

Every session is led by a qualified Level 3 Forest School Leader.

The Forest School Leader holds day-to-day responsibility for:

- Safety and wellbeing of participants
- Planning and reviewing sessions
- Dynamic risk-benefit decision-making
- Safeguarding procedures
- Maintaining Forest School principles in practice

In practical terms, the Leader will:

- Plan sessions responsively



- Brief supporting adults
- Monitor safety and group dynamics
- Make decisions when conditions or needs change
- Liaise with schools, families, or partner organisations where appropriate

During a session, the Leader's decisions on safety and safeguarding are final. This isn't about authority for its own sake, though. It's about ensuring calm, consistent decision-making in environments that can change quickly.

Supporting Adults

Supporting adults play a vital role in Forest School session as they help to create safety, connection, and relational consistency.

Supporting adults are expected to:

- Follow the direction of the Forest School Leader
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Support emotional regulation and co-regulation
- Avoid unnecessary direction or control of play
- Raise concerns promptly and calmly
- Maintain confidentiality

Unless explicitly agreed and appropriately trained, supporting adults do not:

- Lead high-risk activities
- Introduce tools or fire
- Make safeguarding decisions independently

Clarity protects everyone, especially participants.

Volunteers & Visitors

Volunteers, students, and visiting professionals are always welcome, provided safeguarding checks and induction requirements are met.

All volunteers and visitors will:

- Receive an induction
- Be briefed on safety and safeguarding expectations



- Be supervised by the Forest School Leader or delegated adult
- Never be left alone with participants

Visitors are expected to respect established routines, boundaries, and the relational approach of Forest School practice. Forest School may feel relaxed, but it is never casual about safety.

Professional Standards

All Forest School sessions are led by a qualified Level 3 Forest School Leader with relevant Outdoor First Aid certification.

Leaders are expected to:

- Maintain up-to-date qualifications
- Engage in continuing professional development
- Reflect on their practice
- Seek supervision where appropriate

Supporting adults and volunteers must work within the limits of their training and role. Confidence is built on competence.

Professional Boundaries

Strong relationships sit at the heart of Forest School and clear boundaries protect those relationships.

All adults must:

- Communicate respectfully
- Avoid favouritism
- Maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries
- Avoid sharing personal contact details
- Avoid private messaging or contact outside professional context

Physical contact, where necessary, must be:

- Proportionate
- In the participant's best interests
- In line with safeguarding guidance

If unsure, pause and ask.



Boundaries are not barriers to warmth; they are what allow warmth to be safe.



3 Safeguarding & Welfare

Safeguarding Overview

Safeguarding underpins everything we do.

All adults involved in Forest School provision share responsibility for keeping children and young people safe. This includes protecting them from harm, responding appropriately to concerns, and creating an environment where they feel secure, respected, and listened to.

Safeguarding is not a separate task. It is part of daily practice.

Full procedural detail is set out in the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy. This section outlines what that looks like in practice.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for The Forest Folk CIC is:

Artemis Artemiou

07942 911110

arte@theforestfolkcic.co.uk

The DSL holds responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns and liaising with relevant agencies where required.

DSL contact details must be accessible during all sessions.

Responding to Concerns

If you are concerned about a participant's safety or wellbeing:

- Inform the DSL immediately
- Do not investigate
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Record concerns factually and promptly

If a participant makes a disclosure:

- Listen calmly
- Avoid leading questions
- Do not express shock or disbelief



- Reassure them that they were right to speak
- Report to the DSL as soon as possible

Safeguarding concerns must not be delayed.

Recording

All safeguarding concerns are:

- Recorded factually
- Dated and signed
- Stored securely
- Shared only on a need-to-know basis

Personal opinions must be clearly separated from factual observations.

Allegations Against Adults

If a concern arises about the conduct of an adult:

- Report it immediately to the DSL
- If the concern relates to the DSL, report directly to the Director or appropriate external authority
- Do not discuss the concern informally with others

If a safeguarding concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or Director, concerns should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the area in which the incident occurred.

Contact details for the relevant LADO can be found on the Local Authority safeguarding website.

Allegations are managed in line with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

Confidentiality & Information Sharing

Confidentiality is respected, but it is not absolute.

Information may be shared where:

- A participant may be at risk of harm
- There is a safeguarding concern
- There is a legal obligation



Safeguarding always takes priority over privacy.

General information handling procedures are outlined in Section 8: Information, Media & Privacy.

One-to-One Working

One-to-one interactions must be:

- Known to other adults on site
- Visible wherever possible
- Risk assessed where appropriate

No adult should be isolated with a participant without prior agreement and safeguarding consideration.

Welfare & Dignity

Welfare extends beyond safeguarding concerns. It includes how participants are treated day to day.

All adults must:

- Treat participants with dignity and respect
- Protect privacy
- Avoid unnecessary exposure or embarrassment
- Support independence wherever appropriate

Small moments matter, our tone matters, and how we handle privacy matters.

Toileting & Personal Care

Support with toileting or personal care must:

- Preserve dignity
- Be proportionate and age-appropriate
- Follow safeguarding guidance
- Be recorded where appropriate

Adults should encourage independence while ensuring safety and comfort.

Where additional needs are known, plans should be agreed in advance wherever possible.



Food, Allergies, & Health Needs

Relevant medical and allergy information must be accessible during sessions.

Adults must:

- Be aware of known allergies or health conditions
- Follow agreed procedures for food preparation and hygiene
- Monitor for signs of allergic or medical reaction
- Respond promptly to concerns

Food-related procedures are also supported by the Health, Safety, & Risk section.

Emotional Wellbeing

Emotional safety is as important as physical safety.

Adults are expected to:

- Notice changes in mood or regulation
- Offer calm support
- Reduce demands where needed
- Seek additional support if concerns persist

Some participants may communicate distress indirectly. Attentiveness and professional curiosity are essential.



4 Behaviour & Relational Practice

Our Approach to Behaviour

At Forest School, behaviour is understood as communication. There is no ‘misbehaviour’ in our sessions, but there is ‘ineffective communication’.

Children and young people express curiosity, excitement, frustration, uncertainty, and unmet needs through behaviour. Our role is not to control behaviour, but to understand it and respond in ways that protect safety and dignity. We role model what effective communication looks like and support their growth in this aspect of their development, in a way that works for them.

We do not use reward or punishment systems.

We prioritise calm, connection, and clear boundaries.

Full procedural detail is outlined in the Behaviour & Relational Practice Policy. This section sets out what that looks like in practice.

Adult Expectations

Adults set the tone.

All adults are expected to:

- Remain calm and regulated
- Use respectful, non-judgemental language
- Avoid shaming, sarcasm, or public correction
- Offer guidance rather than threats
- Be predictable and consistent

If an adult escalates, the space escalates. If an adult is finding a particular interaction difficult, asking for someone to replace them so that they can take some time to regulate is not only acceptable, but encouraged!

The Three Agreements

We have three non-negotiable boundaries in our sessions:

1. Look after yourself
2. Look after others
3. Look after nature



These agreements are informed by the participants and revisited regularly and held consistently.

When behaviour moves outside these agreements, adults respond calmly and proportionately.

Graduated Response

When behaviour compromises safety, adults follow a graduated approach.

1. *Support and Redirection*
Offer calm reminders. Clarify expectations. Provide alternatives.
2. *Co-Regulation*
Stay close. Reduce demands. Offer grounding support or space.
3. *Environmental Adjustment*
Change the activity, location, grouping, or structure to reduce stress or risk.
4. *Protective Action*
Temporarily remove a participant from an activity, or relocate the group, to maintain safety.

Protective Action is not punishment. It is used to protect safety. Participants are supported to return when safe to do so.

Physical Guidance

Physical intervention is not used as a behaviour management tool.

However, reasonable physical guidance may be used to:

- Prevent immediate harm
- Guide a participant away from danger
- Maintain safety in an emergency

Any physical contact must be:

- Proportionate
- In the participant's best interests
- Recorded where appropriate
- In line with safeguarding guidance

Safety first. Always.

Repair & Reflection

After an incident, the focus is on restoration.

Adults support participants to:



- Reflect on what happened
- Understand impact
- Repair relationships where needed

We prioritise learning and reconnection over punitive consequence. Natural consequences, on the other hand, are an important part of learning.

Ongoing Concerns

If behaviour consistently impacts safety or wellbeing:

- Concerns are discussed outside of the session environment
- Support strategies are reviewed
- Communication takes place with relevant adults (e.g., school or family)

In rare cases, participation may be paused to protect safety. Such decisions are made carefully and communicated clearly.

Behaviour Culture

Forest School works because it feels safe.

That safety comes from:

- Predictability
- Clear boundaries
- Calm adult presence
- Respectful language
- Fairness

Children test boundaries and that is part of development. Our job is not to win power struggles. It is to hold the boundary without losing the relationship.

Calm does not mean passive.

Clear does not mean harsh.

Anti-Bullying

Bullying behaviour is understood and addressed through our relational approach to behaviour, alongside safeguarding procedures where appropriate. Concerns are taken seriously and responded to in ways that prioritise safety, dignity, and repair.



5 Daily Practice & Operations

Rhythm of a Session

Forest School sessions follow a familiar rhythm. Predictability supports emotional safety, but flexibility allows learning to emerge.

Each session operates within a continuous cycle:

Plan → Observe → Reflect → Adapt

Plans guide practice, but they do not rigidly control it. Sessions remain responsive to participants, group dynamics, and environmental conditions. We plan to be flexible.

Planning

The Forest School Leader is responsible for session planning.

Planning is informed by:

- Observations from previous sessions
- Participant needs and interests
- Environmental and seasonal conditions
- Risk considerations

Plans must include:

- Session number (e.g., 7 of 34)
- Roles of supporting adults
- Participant numbers
- Age
- Group needs
- Special needs
- Risk-benefit references
- Observations tied directly to planning
- Ratios justified
- Reflection influencing next session

Planning supports safety and progression. It does not remove space for spontaneity.



Before the Session

Before participants arrive, the Forest School Leader will:

- Complete the Daily Site Risk Assessment
- Check boundaries and environmental conditions
- Ensure first aid and emergency equipment are accessible
- Prepare tools and resources (if required)
- Brief supporting adults

Supporting adults are expected to:

- Attend the briefing
- Clarify their role
- Raise concerns early

Participants are welcomed calmly and given time to arrive and settle.

No session begins without a site check and adult briefing.

Attendance and Registers

Accurate awareness of attendance is essential for safety.

At each session:

- a register of expected participants is held
- participants are checked in on arrival
- headcounts are carried out regularly during the session
- participants are checked out at the end of the session

If a participant is expected but does not arrive, this is identified promptly and followed up in line with agreed procedures.

If a participant goes missing during a session, emergency procedures are followed immediately.

Where Forest School provision is delivered in partnership with a school, overall attendance responsibility remains with the school. Forest School staff are responsible for attendance and supervision during the session.



During the Session

Participants are gradually inducted into Forest School expectations, boundaries, and routines. This includes the three agreements, safety practices, and how we look after ourselves, others, and the environment.

During sessions, adults must:

- Remain present and attentive
- Follow the direction of the Forest School Leader
- Maintain agreed adult-to-participant ratios
- Support participant-led exploration
- Monitor emotional and physical safety
- Raise concerns promptly

Dynamic risk-benefit assessment happens continuously. Adults observe before intervening as intervention should be purposeful and proportionate. Not every wobble needs fixing or every silence filling.

Facilitation

Adults are facilitators, not directors.

This means:

- Offering support rather than solutions
- Modelling calm, respectful behaviour
- Naming risks without creating fear
- Encouraging problem-solving
- Allowing space for independence

Participants learn through doing, experimenting, adjusting, and sometimes trying again.

Adults create the conditions for this to happen safely.

Observation & Reflection

Observation is central to Forest School practice.

The Forest School Leader records:

- Notable moments of engagement or challenge



- Changes in confidence, regulation, or interaction
- Emerging interests or patterns
- Reflections on facilitation and group dynamics

Recording should be concise and meaningful. One or two moments is worth more than reams of narrative. Participant development is increment; our records should be the same.

Observations are:

- Factual
- Respectful
- Anonymised where appropriate
- Stored securely

Reflection informs future planning.

Participant voice informs the ongoing development of sessions. Observations, choices, and feedback from children and young people are taken seriously and used to shape planning, environment, and facilitation.

After the Session

At the end of each session, the Forest School Leader ensures:

- All participants are safely collected or returned
- Tools and equipment are counted, checked, and stored
- Fires are fully extinguished (if used)
- The site is left safe and tidy
- Incidents or near misses are recorded
- Session reflections are completed

Supporting adults assist with equipment checks and site care.

The session is not finished until the site is safe.

Site Care

We are visitors in the natural spaces we use.

All adults must:

- Model care for the environment



- Prevent unnecessary damage
- Rotate areas of use where possible
- Remove non-natural materials
- Leave the site in a safe condition

The woodland is not a backdrop, but part of the learning community.

Record Keeping

The following operational records are maintained:

- Session plans
- Daily site risk assessments
- Incident and accident records
- Reflective observations

Records support continuity, accountability, and safe practice.

Full information handling procedures are outlined in Section 8: Information, Media & Privacy.



6 Health, Safety, & Risk

Our Approach to Risk

Forest School takes place in natural environments, where risk is present.

We use a risk-benefit approach to our sessions, which means that we don't remove all risk. Instead, we understand it, manage it, and support participants to develop judgement and confidence through it.

Safety includes:

- Physical safety
- Emotional safety
- Developmental appropriateness

Removing all challenge removes learning, but ignoring risk removes safety. We intentionally hold the balance between the two.

Full procedural detail is outlined in the relevant Health & Safety policies.

Overall Responsibility

The Forest School Leader holds final responsibility for health and safety decisions during sessions.

All adults must follow the direction of the Forest School Leader.

Supporting adults must not introduce new activities, tools, fire, or equipment without explicit agreement.

Clear responsibility prevents confusion in moments that require quick decisions.

Dynamic Risk

Formal risk assessments are completed before sessions. However, outdoor environments change.

Dynamic risk-benefit assessment happens continuously throughout a session in response to:

- Weather changes
- Ground conditions
- Group dynamics
- Spontaneous play
- Emerging hazards



If conditions become unsafe, activities may be adapted, paused, or stopped.

Stopping an activity is good judgement, not failure.

First Aid & Emergencies

At least one appropriately trained first aider is present at every session; best practice is to have two.

All adults must know:

- Who the first aider is
- Where first aid equipment is located
- How to summon support in an emergency

In the event of an emergency:

- One adult remains with the injured person
- Another contacts emergency services if required
- The rest of the group is supervised safely

Emergency procedures must be followed immediately and calmly.

Accidents & Near Misses

All accidents, incidents, and near misses must be:

- Responded to promptly
- Reported to the Forest School Leader
- Recorded as soon as possible

Recording is not about blame. It supports reflection, improvement, and accountability.

Fire

Fire may only be led by trained staff.

When fire is in use:

- Fire areas must be clearly defined
- Boundaries must be respected
- Fires must never be left unattended
- Appropriate extinguishing methods must be available



- Fires must be fully extinguished before leaving site

If environmental conditions increase fire risk, fire will not be used. Respect for fire creates safety around fire.

Tools

Tools are introduced gradually and based on readiness and trust.

All tool use must:

- Be supervised
- Follow a clear tool talk
- Take place in designated areas
- Respect safe working distances

Tools must be counted, checked, and stored after use.

Construction

Participants may build dens, shelters, or rope-based structures.

Adults must:

- Check anchor points and knots
- Assess weight-bearing structures
- Monitor stability
- Adapt activities if weather or conditions change

Structures are temporary and built with environmental care in mind. Building safely is part of the learning.

Weather

Forest School operates in most weather conditions.

Sessions may be adapted, paused, or cancelled where conditions create unacceptable risk, including:

- High winds
- Electrical storms
- Flooding
- Extreme temperatures



Decisions are based on participant welfare and site-specific assessment.

Clothing

Appropriate clothing is essential.

Participants are expected to wear:

- Weather-appropriate outdoor clothing
- Sturdy footwear

If clothing compromises safety or wellbeing, activities may be adapted. Cold, wet, or overheated participants cannot engage safely.

Environmental Responsibility

Caring for the environment is part of safe practice.

All adults must:

- Model care for living things
- Prevent unnecessary environmental damage
- Rotate areas of use where possible
- Remove non-natural materials
- Leave the site safe and tidy

We work with the land, not against it.



The Forest Folk

Emergency Procedures

First Rule

- Stay calm
- Keep the group together

Fire

- Move group to evacuation point
- Headcount
- Call emergency services if needed

Serious Injury

- First aider treats casualty
- One adult stays with casualty
- One adult supervises group
- Call emergency services if needed

Missing Participant

- Gather group at meeting point
- Headcount
- Search immediate area
- Call emergency services if not found quickly

Severe Weather

- Stop activities
- Move group to safe area
- Evacuate site if conditions remain unsafe

Threat / Criminal Incident

- Move group away from danger
- Find safe location
- Call police

Emergency Information

- Emergency contact details



- Site address / grid reference
- Mobile signal location if known



7 Inclusion & Conduct

Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion

Inclusion is not an add-on to Forest School; it is part of how we work.

All participants have the right to feel safe, respected, and able to take part. Differences in background, identity, ability, language, belief, and experience are recognised and respected.

Discrimination, harassment, or exclusionary behaviour is not tolerated.

Full procedural detail is outlined in the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy. This section sets out what that means in practice.

Inclusive Practice

Adults are expected to:

- Use respectful and inclusive language
- Avoid assumptions about identity or ability
- Offer multiple ways to participate
- Adjust pacing, structure, or grouping where needed
- Be attentive to sensory and emotional differences

Participation is never forced as choice and dignity are central to our practice. Reasonable adjustments are made wherever practicable to support access and belonging.

Responding to Discrimination

If discriminatory language or behaviour occurs:

- Address it calmly and clearly
- Name why it is not acceptable
- Reinforce shared expectations (i.e., the three agreements)
- Follow safeguarding procedures where appropriate

Concerns must be reported to the Forest School Leader.

Repeated or serious incidents are managed in line with safeguarding and behaviour procedures. Ignoring discriminatory behaviour is not neutral. It reinforces harm.

Conduct Expectations

All adults help shape the culture of Forest School. How we show up matters.



We expect all adults to:

- communicate with respect and care
- remain calm, regulated, and consistent
- prioritise safety, dignity, and inclusion
- maintain clear and appropriate boundaries
- follow the direction of the Forest School Leader
- work within their role and level of training
- raise concerns promptly and appropriately

Adults model the tone of the space. Calm creates calm.

Relationships are central to our work, and boundaries are what make those relationships safe.

Safeguarding responsibilities always apply. Concerns must be reported in line with the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.

Conduct online and in public settings must reflect the same standards as on site.
(See Section 8: Information, Media & Privacy for guidance on information sharing and media use.)

Full expectations are outlined in the Code of Conduct Policy.

Community Expectations

Forest School sessions are shared spaces and, as such, adults and participants are co-creators of the environment.

We expect:

- Respect for people
- Respect for differences
- Respect for shared equipment and spaces
- Willingness to repair when things go wrong

Belonging is built through relational consistency, not behaviour management.

Partnership with Families & Schools

Forest School works best when communication is open and collaborative.

We aim to:

- Share relevant information appropriately



- Listen to concerns
- Be transparent about boundaries and expectations
- Work constructively with partner organisations

Where concerns arise, early conversation is encouraged.

Clear communication prevents small misunderstandings from becoming larger issues.



8 Information, Media, & Privacy

Data Protection Overview

Personal information is handled lawfully, respectfully, and securely.

Participants and families trust us with sensitive information. That trust must be protected.

Full legal and procedural detail is outlined in the Data Protection & Privacy Policy. This section explains what that looks like in daily practice.

Handling Information on Site

Adults must:

- Access personal information only if required for their role
- Keep documents secure and out of public view
- Avoid discussing participants in public or informal settings
- Ensure written notes are factual and respectful
- Report lost or misplaced information immediately

Confidential conversations should not take place where they may be overheard.

Information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is expected in all aspects of practice.

Adults must not:

- Share personal information casually
- Discuss participants outside professional context
- Retain information for personal use

Confidentiality does not override safeguarding. Where there is a concern about safety, information must be shared appropriately.

(See Section 3: Safeguarding & Welfare.)

Digital Safety and Device Use

Forest School prioritises engagement with the natural environment. The use of personal devices by participants is generally discouraged.

Where mobile phones or devices are present:



- they must not be used to photograph or record others without consent
- they must not be used in ways that compromise safety, privacy, or wellbeing

Adults remain attentive to any situation where a participant's use of a device raises concern.

If a child or young person shares something online that causes concern, this is treated as a safeguarding matter and responded to in line with safeguarding procedures.

Adults must:

- use personal devices only where necessary and appropriate
- not share images or information about participants on personal platforms
- maintain professional boundaries in all digital communication

Even in outdoor spaces, safeguarding responsibilities extend beyond the physical environment.

Photography & Video

Photographs or video may only be taken where appropriate consent has been obtained.

Images must:

- Be used respectfully
- Reflect participant dignity
- Be stored securely
- Be used only for agreed purposes

Personal devices must not be used to photograph participants unless explicitly authorised.

Images must not be shared informally or via personal social media accounts.

Social Media

Adults must:

- Maintain professional boundaries online
- Avoid discussing participants, families, or partner organisations publicly
- Avoid sharing images or identifying information
- Reflect professional standards in all public-facing communication

Online conduct must match the same standards expected on site.



Data Breaches

Any actual or suspected data breach must be reported immediately to the Forest School Leader.

Examples include:

- Lost paperwork
- Sending information to the wrong person
- Unauthorised access to records

Prompt reporting protects participants and the organisation.



9 Communication, Feedback, & Complaints

Communication & Feedback

Clear communication is part of safe and effective practice.

We aim to:

- Share relevant information appropriately
- Be transparent about expectations and boundaries
- Respond to questions or concerns promptly
- Maintain respectful dialogue with families, schools, and partners

Feedback is welcomed. It helps us reflect and improve. Most concerns are best addressed early, through calm and direct conversation.

Informal Concerns

Where possible, concerns should be raised informally in the first instance.

This may involve:

- Speaking directly with the Forest School Leader
- Seeking clarification
- Addressing misunderstandings early

Many concerns can be resolved quickly through open conversation. Raising a concern in good faith will never result in unfavourable treatment.

Formal Complaints

If a concern cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be made in writing (either via mail or email) to:

Mail

The Forest Folk CIC
141, Towcester Road,
Northampton
NN4 8LR

Email

hello@theforestfolkci.co.uk



A formal complaint should clearly outline:

- The nature of the concern
- Relevant dates or details
- The outcome sought (if appropriate)

Complaints will be acknowledged and reviewed in line with the Complaints Policy. Complaints are handled with fairness, confidentiality, and proportionality.

Safeguarding Overrides

If a concern relates to safeguarding:

- Safeguarding procedures take priority
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed immediately
- The matter may be referred to external agencies

Safeguarding concerns do not follow the standard complaints process.

(See Section 3: Safeguarding & Welfare.)

Escalation

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after a formal response, further review may be requested in line with the Complaints Policy.

Where appropriate, concerns may also be referred to relevant external bodies.

Records of complaints are kept securely and used to inform learning and improvement.



10 Governance & Review

Accountability

The Forest Folk CIC operates with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

The Director holds overall responsibility for:

- Strategic direction
- Legal compliance
- Financial oversight
- Safeguarding accountability
- Quality assurance

Operational responsibility during sessions sits with the Forest School Leader.

Clear governance ensures that decisions are not improvised, responsibilities are understood, and standards are maintained. Accountability is part of safeguarding.

Policy Framework

Forest School provision operates in line with:

- This Handbook (operational guidance)
- The Policies & Procedures Booklet (formal procedures and statutory detail)

All adults involved in provision are expected to:

- Read relevant documents
- Follow agreed procedures
- Raise questions or concerns where unclear

Policies are reviewed regularly and updated when guidance, legislation, or organisational learning requires it.

Monitoring & Review

Quality is maintained through ongoing review.

This includes:

- Reflection following sessions
- Review of incidents and near misses



- Feedback from participants, families, and partner organisations
- Professional discussion and supervision
- Review of safeguarding practice

Learning informs planning and reflection informs change. Where practice falls short, it is addressed promptly and proportionately.

Whistleblowing

If an adult has concerns about unsafe, unethical, or unlawful practice, they must raise those concerns promptly.

Concerns may be raised:

- With the Director
- Directly with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) if the concern relates to safeguarding
- With relevant external bodies where appropriate

Concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously and will not result in unfavourable treatment. Professional integrity includes the willingness to speak when something feels wrong.

Document Control

All organisational documents:

- Are dated
- Have a review cycle
- May be reviewed earlier following significant incidents or changes in guidance

The most current versions are stored securely and made available to relevant stakeholders. Outdated versions are archived appropriately.

Continuous Improvement

The Forest Folk CIC is committed to ongoing development.

This includes:

- Continuing professional development
- Reflective practice
- Responsive policy updates



- Strengthening governance structures as the organisation grows