



# The Mosley Academy Forest School Handbook 2025- 2027



*‘Forest School is an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees’.*  
(Forest School Association)

### **Our Vision**

At The Mosley Academy, through our Forest School sessions, we hope to encourage independent, enthusiastic and creative learners, who develop holistically through a well-planned and interesting child centred approach.

### **What is Forest School?**

Forest School takes place in our small wooded / garden environment, out on the school field area, and is used by the whole school. We also have access to the National Forest in the village. The Forest School principles and how they link to our setting are as follows:

1. Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions - we aim for children across the school to visit in blocks of six to eight weeks throughout the academic year.
2. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are all integral parts of the Forest School process.
3. We aim to promote the holistic development in all of those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
4. We offer learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.
5. We use a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.
6. It is managed by a qualified Forest School Practitioner; Robyn Botterill who is currently the school’s Level 3 Forest School Leader. Robyn is an external FS leader and works across other settings leading FS sessions. Robyn has her own risk assessments and insurance, held centrally within school.

### **Forest School ethos**

At The Mosley Academy we are committed to the ethos of Forest School and aim to:

- Fulfil every child’s potential
- Develop a love of learning that creates independent and confident learners
- Promote a secure, exciting and fascinating learning environment
- Support a positive relationship with home and the wider community

- Promote children's self-esteem
- Encourage independence
- Promote positive behaviour to ensure the safe running of Forest School sessions
- Provide appropriate adult:child ratios
- Plan sessions that contribute towards a safe environment

### **Our rules and routines at Forest School**

Expectations of behaviour will be set by the Forest School Leader and discussed with the children in the classroom beforehand, in conjunction with the School's Relational and Restorative Behaviour procedure. Children will also help set rules, which will be revisited at every session. These include:

- Respect for plants, trees and animals
- Staying in view of the base camp at all times
- Staying within the designated areas at all times
- Adult supervision for tree climbing

### **Adult Role**

All adults at Forest School model appropriate behaviour and safe practices, whilst interacting with the children and each other; boundaries are shared, promoting positive reinforcement and choices and consequences discussed. They will:

- Promote the safety and well-being of the children at all times
- Carry out necessary risk assessments
- Carry a first aid kit and administer first aid as required. A walkie talkie will also be taken out to Forest school sessions.
- Create a positive learning environment, based on each child's needs
- Encourage good relationships, based on respect of each other
- Promote, honesty, politeness and kindness through example
- Use encouraging language and show appreciation of each child's contributions and effort
- Ensure fair treatment and equality for all attending, regardless of age, gender, ability or race, in line with the school's Equality Policy.

### **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; children and adults need to be adequately dressed in order to gain the full learning potential of the session.

**In their kits, children should have:**

- Long sleeved top
- Trousers, to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches
- Waterproof jacket and waterproof trousers
- Long socks, wellies or old trainers (in very hot dry weather)
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc. are required.

Children should arrive at school in their school uniform and bring other items, in a bag, to change into for the session. There are spare coats and wellies in the Forest School shed should children forget those items of clothing. All children should keep a pair of wellies at school all year round.

**Practical Skills and safe tool use at Forest School**

**General rules for tool use:**

- All tools have a separate risk assessment
- The Forest School Leader is nominated to ensure safe storage of tools on school premises
- All staff ensure safe storage whilst at the Forest School Site and tools to be signed out
- We do not walk around with tools, wherever possible
- Tools should be kept clean with oily rag, sharp and checked before every use
- Tools should only be used with a designated trained adult

**Knives:**

- Children must be supported 1:1 or 1:2 depending on age range by an adult, preferably the Forest School Leader, initially demonstrating good practice
- Users should preferably be sat down in a designated area
- Knives should be used away from the body
- Ensure knives are clean and covered when not in use.

**Bow-Saw or Pruning Saw:**

- Children will be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Guard is in place when not in use

- Use in a designated area away from others
- Use with a glove on the non-sawing hand
- Use a saw-horse where possible with the bow saw.

#### **Loppers:**

- Children must be supported 1:1 by an adult preferably the Forest School Leader and good practice demonstrated
- Use in a designated area, away from others
- Loppers must be kept closed except when in use

#### **Fire:**

- Fires must only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone
- Safe fire-lighting equipment must be used with no accelerants
- An adult must be located at the fire at all times
- Suitable accident prevention and management should be next to site
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire - a fire bucket will be on the FS site when fires are being used as part of the session
- Site to be made safe on completion of activity
- Cooking or other activities located near the fire to have ratios of 1:2 for children directly involved in the activity.

#### **Ropes and Knots:**

- All equipment to be regularly checked for fraying etc.
- Children should not wrap rope around their bodies
- Children should be encouraged to learn to tie and undo simple knots
- If tying between trees, the rope should be able to be seen and not cause a trip hazard.

### **Assessment and Reporting Arrangements for Forest School Sessions**

During Forest School sessions, children will be observed and assessed in an unobtrusive way as within the classroom. Evidence will be gathered using photographs, videos, written observations and through our social media platform, Instagram. All staff involved in Forest School will be responsible for gathering evidence; volunteers would be asked to feedback to the Forest School Leader.

The school may report to parents on the impact of Forest School work at parents evening and in annual school reports. Parents will also be able to access photographs of the children working on the school website or Instagram page.

## Forest School Procedures

The following pages include all the Forest School Policies required.



### The Mosley Academy's Weather Policy.



#### **Statement of intent:**

The Mosley Academy believes 'There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing'.

The Health and Safety at work Regulations Act 1999 requires employers to assess the risks of activities; introduce measures to control these risks and to tell their employees about these measures.

So far as reasonably practicable the academy staff and management will take all reasonable steps to identify and reduce hazards to a minimum. However all staff, parent helpers, volunteers, students, governors and children must appreciate that their own safety and that of others also depends on their individual conduct and vigilance whilst partaking in outdoor learning sessions, including Forest School activities.

Forest School is an outdoor 'classroom' environment; and as such, weather can be the most influential element in what and how things happen.

#### **Procedures:**

The Forest School Activity Leader is responsible for checking local weather conditions on the morning of a planned forest school activity. We will use BBC local weather forecasts to get an accurate and up to date understanding of the local weather patterns.

There is no such thing as bad weather; however, wind can be a dangerous element in woodland areas due to potential falling branches etc. Therefore in the event of strong winds (measuring over 25 mph) or during storms where there is thunder and lightning, sessions will not take place in the woodland areas, and other options will be considered.

Dependent on conditions these options may include;

- Activities to take place on the fields away from wooded areas.
- Groups moved to playground.
- Sessions conducted in outdoor classroom.
- Children moved to school hall / empty classroom.

At the first opportunity, after storms or periods of strong wind, particular attention should be paid to the canopy layer of wooded areas, to check for fallen/damaged trees/branches and debris.

### **Clothing:**

All children will be equipped with appropriate clothing before embarking on Forest Schools activities. See early section of Forest School Handbook.

NB: As a matter of course, children are expected to have warm coats, hats, scarves, gloves and waterproof footwear in school during winter months. They are also required to have a sunhat, sun cream (factor >30spf) and a drinking water bottle in school during warmer months.

Adult helpers are advised to be appropriately dressed for outdoor learning activities, including Forest School activities and, where necessary, wear wellies / hats / gloves / spare socks and additional coats, as well as protecting themselves during warm/sunny weather conditions.

### **Itinerary:**

The Mosley Academy will strive to take the children outside at all times as we believe exposure to the elements is part of the magic of nature and therefore an integral part of Forest School learning.

Planned themes and activities will always be very flexible and able to be adapted due to changeable weather conditions.

In cold weather children will be more encouraged to be more active.

More sedentary activities will take place in warmer conditions.

In severe cold weather; sessions times will be reduced accordingly and children will be taken for a warming drink if appropriate.

Additional clothing including socks and gloves are available to Forest School staff should any child find they do not have sufficient protection.

### **Duties of the management (head teacher, deputy head teacher and governing body):**

To monitor the project and the safety measures put in place

To be aware of the risk assessments

To be available as a contact for the group leader to contact as part of emergency procedures.

Periodically assess the effectiveness of the policies and procedures put into place.

Review the effectiveness of the use of the school site and the cost effectiveness.

***Reviewed: September 2025.***



**Safeguarding at Forest School**

Safeguarding at Forest School is in line with The Mosley Academy's Safeguarding Policy, available on the school website or from the school office.

As this is such a large document, a summary of the policy is included below:

- Every child has the right to be kept safe from danger and learn in a safe and secure environment
- All staff involved in Forest School hold relevant DBS checks
- All Forest School staff attend regular safeguarding training
- All concerns and disclosures are confidential and will only be shared with the school's designated safeguarding leaders and necessary agencies, if appropriate

The Mosley Academy is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its pupils and expect all staff, volunteers and visitors to share this commitment.



### **Health and Safety at Forest School**

The Forest School provision follows the practices outlined in the Health and Safety policy, which can be found as a separate document. The following H & S statement applies.

1. The Mosley Academy's Health Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Policy Statement complements and has been developed from Staffordshire County Council Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
2. The requirement to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all employees is acknowledged and the Governing Body and those in control of the school recognise and take responsibility for compliance with the statutory duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974.
3. In compliance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, The Mosley Academy's Governing Body will ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that:
  - all places and premises where staff and pupils are required to work and engage in school activities are maintained in a condition which is safe and without risk to health. (This includes the health and safety of persons on school premises or taking part in school activities elsewhere.)
  - all plant and equipment is safe to use and that arrangements exist for the safe use, handling and storage of articles and substances at work.
  - appropriate safe systems of work exist and are maintained.
  - sufficient information, instruction, training and supervision is available and provided to ensure that staff and pupils can avoid hazards and contribute in a positive manner towards their own health and safety and others.
  - a healthy working environment is maintained including adequate Wellbeing facilities.

4. In addition to the above The Mosley Academy will ensure that so far as is reasonably practicable that the health and safety of non employees is not adversely affected by its' activities.

5. Employee involvement is an important part of managing safely, and consultation on health and safety with employees and employee representatives forms part of this policy.

6. This policy statement and the accompanying organisational arrangements supersede any previously issued.

