

Aurora  
Meldreth Manor School

# Aurora Meldreth Manor School

Forest School

information, policies, and procedures handbook

May 2022

“Caring, ambitious, collaborative, trusted and innovative”



# Aurora Meldreth Manor School

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### What is forest school?

Forest school is a learning approach that aims to develop learner's independence and self-esteem through practical learning experiences in a woodland area or natural environment.

It is a holistic approach to learning that supports the development of the learner's wellbeing and self-awareness, communication and social skills, ability to self-regulate, self-motivation and empathy.

Activities encourage exploration, child led learning, experiencing risk and challenge, making choices, and building positive relationships with themselves, the environment and others.

With regular and sustained access forest school becomes a unique learning space where the teacher becomes a facilitator, and the learner is at the centre of everything taking place.



### Forest school at Meldreth Manor

At Meldreth Manor the aim for forest school is to offer our young people a space where they can begin to communicate and learn in their preferred ways allowing us to step into their world for a little while. Sessions aim to make learning experiences enjoyable and fun promoting a positive attitude to learning that can be transferred to the classroom.

#### **Provision**

The school will aim to offer at least 3 hours a week in 2 one and a half hour sessions throughout the year. Young people will be assessed for their suitability for the sessions. Due to the nature of their disabilities, health needs and ways they like to learn forest school may not be appropriate for everyone. In addition to forest school we encourage outdoor cross curricula learning throughout the school.

#### **Environmental impact**

At Meldreth Manor staff and young people are encouraged to take care of the environment and take part in activities such as habitat building, litter picking, recycling and taking care of native flora and fauna. There is a forest school management plan in place with objectives to minimise the impact of activities on the site and improve the conditions for animals and plants in the area whilst building a stock of sustainable materials for forest school.

#### **Communication**

To be successful in its operation parents, carers, supporting staff and stakeholders will be informed of the aims, objectives and progress of forest school activities throughout the year using regular reviews and information sharing in a variety of formats.

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## Forest school code

Each session we aim to teach our young people the green code for working in the forest school space.

- No eating wild food or vegetation
- Follow instructions to keep you safe during activities
- Care for nature
- No throwing items especially near the fire pit
- Carry items carefully and think about others using the space
- Ask an adult before you use a tool
- Wash your hands before food and after a session
- Explore and have fun!

Supporting adults can help learners to follow these rules, by modelling best practise and promoting safety at all times.



## Meldreth Manor Forest school ethos

### **We aim to provide:**

- Experiences and adventure in an outdoor environment, with the individual central to and leading what is taking place.
- Enable individuals to have a sense of self, independence, responsibility and choice through having experiences in the natural environment over a regular and sustained period.
- Access for all regardless of physical, health or behavioural needs. Including meeting age appropriate (including mental age), cultural, social and religious and other preferences that may not always be easily communicated by the individual.
- Provision of a safe environment that is considerate of health and behavioural needs but must not exclude challenging cases, instead flexible thinking and risk assessment about how we resolve them outside the box!
- Time to process the environment, activities and work at a pace personal to the individual.
- Enable engagement and taking part, using the senses, careful thought for those with sensory processing disorders.
- Develop skills, understanding, attention and communication through investigating the outdoors.
- Enable social, emotional, personal development and confidence building experiences through individual and group outdoor experiences.
- supporting staff who are role models who live by the Forest School Ethos and are there to notice learning and aid its development.
- A collective value for our natural site at home and in the community.



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-Foster the enjoyment of the outdoors through getting messy, taking risks and feeling challenged while being supported by the Forest School family.



## Forest school team

### **Emily Willis**

Open Awards Level 3 Forest School Leader

First Aid in the outdoors (2 days)

**All teachers and class leaders can run forest school sessions for their classes and have received in house training to do this. This is deemed to be the most appropriate way to deliver forest school at Meldreth due to the unique learning and health needs of each class.**

The forest school ethos and session ideas have been shared with teaching staff to support with outdoor learning activities. Forest school development plans for September 2021 aim to begin to imbed the forest school principals and activities into the daily curriculum.

### **Supporting staff**

All supporting staff are first aid trained and hold food hygiene certificates.

At the beginning of each session all supporting staff are briefed on the aims and safety aspects of the session. Risk assessments and BSP plans for specific activities and students are shared each session.

It is a requirement that all staff read this handbook and associated risk benefit plans before taking part in a session.

Students will be supported in sessions on a 1:1 or 2:1 ratio and use of tools and fire pit activities will be under the direction of the forest school leader in prior assessments.





## Health and Safety

### **Responsibilities**

For forest school at Meldreth Manor to be an enjoyable and beneficial experience the health, safety and wellbeing of our young people is a priority. The policies and procedures in this handbook are in addition to the main school policies and run alongside them to support the safe running of forest schools.

Forest school is held on the school premises in the “Wild Zone” and is attended by young people from the school. It is covered by the Aurora Groups school’s liability insurance which covers activities in the main school. Policy code: UAP337051812A

The forest school leader has a duty of care to the young people and the safe running of forest schools and holds personal liability insurance for forest school practises.

### **Risk assessment**

The forest school leader will carry out risk benefit assessments for the site on a seasonal basis and if there are any permanent changes. These will be discussed with site team manager (John Everitt).

### **Daily Sweep**

The forest school leader will perform a daily assessment of the site before its use to assess for any hazards or changes that could cause harm. Any hazards will be removed or reported to the site team as required and a decision will be made as to whether a session can run or not.

### **Activity risk assessment**

The forest school leader holds responsibility for completing risk benefit assessments for forest school activities and will put in place control measures to minimise risk. As the learners may also invent activities of their own the forest school leader will take responsibility for assessing the risk in the moment and complete a risk benefit assessment as soon

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as possible after the session. All activities and use of the space will be assessed on the day according to the weather, the students attending and their wellbeing/behaviour at the time. The forest school leader will make the choice to end the session if activities become unsafe for whatever reasonable circumstance.



### First Aid

Each session a first aid kit and a burns first aid kit will be in a red rucksack close to the fire pit area. The rucksack can be accessed by trained first aiders only.

**The rucksack contains the following first aid items:**

First aid kit including plasters, eye irrigation, bandages, dressings and tape

Burns kit including latex gloves, cling film and scissors

Blanket and small tarp

Fire blanket

Wipes and tissues

Fresh water in sealed container

Spare clothing

Sugary snacks

Emergency action plan and individual student hospital/medication protocols

Student medication kits

Sun creams per individual

Ice packs

CPR face shield

Mobile phone and 999 emergency script

**The forest school leader is responsible checking the stock of the first aid kits and replenishing the rucksack each session.**

**Supporting staff will be advised of medical needs of the students each session.**

### Emergency first aid procedures

**Emergency where casualty can be treated with first aid:**

At the beginning of each session the forest school leader will assign a supporting staff member as number 2 (they will support with first aid in an emergency)

- Alarm raised by child or staff member
- Students advised to stop using tools or activities and supporting adults to escort them to a safe place.
- Forest school leader to assess situation and remove hazards. Adult 2 will collect first aid rucksack from the fire pit area.
- Forest school leader will treat the casualty with assistance from adult 2.
- Forest school leader will assess if casualty needs:  
Further treatment or to go home

### Monitoring

Can resume the session

- Parents/carers/ care team and duty managers informed and advised to monitor.
- Forest school leader and supporting staff to complete accident forms, school pod and welfare sheet.
- Risk assessments for activities reviewed by forest school leader.

## **Emergency first aid procedures**

### **Emergency where casualty requires support from the emergency services.**

At the beginning of each session the forest school leader will assign a supporting staff member as number 2 (they will support with first aid in an emergency)

-Alarm raised by child or staff member

1. Secure other children and adults to a safe place, due to the level of disabilities of the children this may be to an indoor space. As the area is overlooked by other buildings the forest school leader may request supporting staff use equipment to block out the area to preserve dignity for the casualty.

2. The forest school leader will assess the incident for the safety of the area and will prioritise identifying and attending to the injuries of the casualty. They will request adult 2 to bring first aid equipment located at fire pit.

3. The forest school leader will ensure they have the correct information to give the emergency services:

**Location postcode:**SG8 6LG

Condition of the casualty, medical needs, age, access to the site and other concerns

4. The forest school leader will perform regular check ins with the casualty, they may ask an additional supporting member of staff to assist to check for shock or changes in condition of the casualty.

5. The forest school leader will contact other appropriate authorities including the duty manager team, Nadine Mcfadden and parents.

6. The forest school leader will debrief with staff and inform that it is not appropriate to speak to the media. Accident to be recorded as a welfare sheet, accident log and school pod.

### Emergency service script

#### REQUESTING ATTENDENCE BY THE EMERGENCY SERVICES

1. Dial 999 and ask for the emergency service. Speak slowly and clearly and be ready to repeat any information.  
School contact: 01763268000  
Location: Meldreth Manor School, Fenny Lane, SG8 6LG
2. Give a brief description of the problem (for example, if you are requesting an ambulance, give a description of the injury or illness).
3. State the ambulance will be met at the entrance gate to the main grounds by a member of staff.
4. The nearest landing site for the Air Ambulance is in the main school playing field.

### Casualty monitoring form

Time (24hr)				
Pulse	Rate per (min):			
	Character:			
Breathing	Rate per (min):			
	Character:			
Temperature	Warm/dry			
	Hot/wet			
	Hot/dry			
Colour				
Consciousness				



### Daily operating procedure

**The forest school leader will:**

Plan and facilitate child centred forest school sessions, plans, risk assessments and medication will be provided to supporting staff at the beginning of each session.

Ensure all resources and equipment are available, safe for use and checked in and out at the beginning and end of each session.

carry out a daily risk assessment of the site and address any concerns.

Ensure that tools are kept in locked storage until required for use.

**Session routines**

Students are encouraged to learn self-awareness and build self esteem through helping to carry, look after and set up equipment at the beginning and end of each session.

At the beginning of the session the students will meet in “poppy class” and spend time preparing for the session using their symbol timetables, taking part in registration and changing into appropriate clothing/footwear for activities and weather.

The class will walk together to the “forest zone” and gather at the fire pit circle. We will sing the “welcome song” and recap our green code and discuss potential session activities. For our students it is important that they know what is happening and when. Supporting staff can help by joining in signing and using symbols with their allocated young person.

There will be two breaks to meet personal care and basic needs during the session, the forest leader will indicate when these are appropriate and will be looking for a natural break in the activities. However, supporting staff can indicate this to the forest school leader if they feel needs a learner needs this sooner.

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The end of the session will be indicated by a coming together at the fire pit to extinguish the fire, spend reflection time and sing the “goodbye” song.

The forest school leader will indicate break and endings in activities by giving a 20minute call, 10minute call, 5minute call and the 5,4,3,2,1 call.

### **During the session supporting adults can help by:**

- Being vigilant around safety and asking for the support of the forest school leader if they are unsure about an activity.
- Model activities, attitudes and approaches to learning with students
- Allow the young person to lead and engage in intensive interaction, games and prompts from the student.
- Be flexible it isn't about the outcome it is about the experience!

### **After the session**

Learners and supporting staff can help to pack up, count in and return equipment to storage areas.

Learners can be supported to change clothing and transition to other activities back in “poppy class”.

### **The reflective nature of forest school**

The success of forest school is dependent on all those taking a reflective approach to learning in order to build on learning experiences and carry them through to the next sessions to be built on.

The forest school leader would welcome observations and ideas from supporting staff these can be verbal or noted down and shared.

### Cancellations Policy

Forest school aims to provide experiences for young people in all seasons and all weathers through flexible planning and the provision of appropriate clothing and PPE.

However, there are some circumstances where it may not be safe or practical to hold a forest school session:

- High winds of 25mph or more (MET office)
- Amber temperature warnings (MET office)
- Sessions may be made shorter in the case of below 0 temperatures and children will be assessed for appropriate clothing.
- If a young person's health needs and disabilities are likely to be affected by certain environmental conditions personal to them. Such as high temperature causing seizures.
- Staff ratios and health impacting on the safety of the learners.

In the case of a session being cancelled the forest school leader will deliver an indoor nature session or activity.



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## Toileting Policy

It is important that we meet the basic needs of our young people to ensure they can engage in the learning and experiences available to them at forest school.

Students will be encouraged to use the toilet at the beginning and end of forest school sessions.

To support students who follow personal care routines, breaks will be planned into sessions to allow staff to prompt students to the toilet. Toilets next to sweet pea class can be accessed for this.

Young people will be supported 1:1 or 2:1 to use the toilet and staff will work flexibility to support them to return to the sessions as soon as they are able.

The forest school leader will be informed of students leaving to use the toilet so that numbers can be accounted for.



### Consent and confidentiality

Forest school's policy on consent and confidentiality works alongside the Aurora Meldreth Manors policy and aims to respect the privacy of our learners, their families and our staff.

In relation to forest school the following applies:

- Medical, dietary and allergy information on learners attending forest school is securely held by the school nurses and duty manager teams. Information on conditions and medical needs for activities is shared with those supporting the learner and medication is administered by a person who has been medication trained. Records of medicine administration is kept in a locked cabinet with the duty manager team.

- Medical and other information on learners is shared with supporting staff on a need to know basis. Volunteers and Agency staff are not permitted to administer or have access to medication for a child. Only first aid trained members of staff can have access to the first aid rucksack. In between sessions this is kept in a locked location.

- Where appropriate parents and carers will receive a verbal and written request to allow their child to take part in forest schools and provided with information for data protection and a signed form to consent to information and photos to be used. These forms are held in a locked location by the forest school leader.

- Emergency contact information is held by the duty manager team and school office in a locked location.

### Clothing Policy

The forest school leader can supply some items of spare clothing, waterproofs and wellies as part of the forest school kit and is responsible for providing PPE for specific activities. As a responsible member of staff, the forest school leader may exclude a learner from activities if they are not wearing appropriate clothing.

Supporting staff and parents are responsible for providing appropriate clothing for sessions as follows:

#### **Autumn/ Winter**

Vest/ t-shirt base layer and a long-sleeved top

Hooded top, fleece or thick jumper

Waterproof jacket

Thick socks

Trousers

Wellington boots or walking boots

Scarf, hat, gloves

#### **Spring/summer**

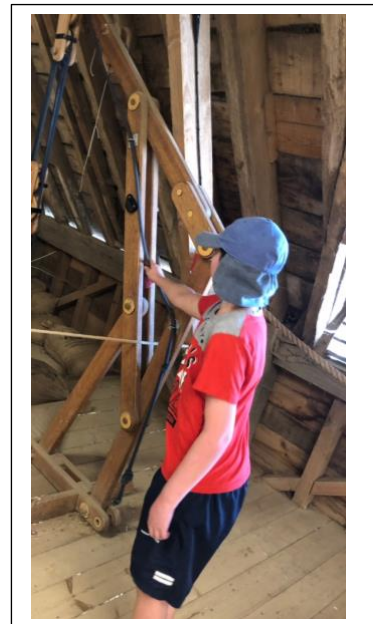
Sun cream

Long sleeved t-shirt or top

Light trousers (skin must be covered for fire pit activities)

Walking boots with tread

Sun hat





### Use of tools

Forest school may use the following tools in activities:

Bow saw

Bill hook

Wooden Mallet

Loppers

Sheath knife

Tools are used with 1:1 or 2:1 supervision and under guidance and demonstration from the forest school leader.

#### **Safe use**

Young people and staff are encouraged to use tools when it is assessed that they are ready to do so and can demonstrate safe practises in other areas of forest school.

Tool demonstrations take place before an activity and learning is consolidated through recap activities and in following sessions.

Young people must ask for permission to take a tool from the toolbox and must have a clear purpose for using the tool. They must know how to use it or be taught how to use it.

#### **Tool care**

The forest school leader is responsible for the safe use, storage and maintenance of all tools.

Tools are stored in a toolbox and lockable storage area; each session plan has a tool checklist attached to it so that items are checked in and out each session.

If tools are not deemed fit for purpose, they will be removed from the toolbox and repaired or replaced.

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Supporting adults and young people can complete their own tool safety checks before they use tools and alert the forest school leader of any concerns.

## Health and safety

Appropriate PPE is provided for staff and young people according to each activity and there is a clothing policy that advises on suitable and safe clothing to be worn by participants.

Young people must demonstrate that they have a safe space to use their tool in by using the “two arms and a tool away rule”.

Activity risk and benefit assessments are available for each activity using tools. In addition to this are individual on the day risk assessments for specific students.



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## Use of campfires

Campfires and outdoor cooking are an important part of the forest school experience and provide many learning opportunities for our young people.

### **Fire Location**

Only designated sites should be used for campfires at Meldreth Manor this on the fire pit patio in the wild zone. This is cited away from low canopy branches.

Fires should only be lit in the metal fire pit on legs in the patio location, this is to support the safety and learning of our students and to prevent the spread of fire.

### **Positioning of children and adults**

The fire area is surrounded by pallet seating set at 1.5 cm from the metal fire pit. Logs may be placed around the circle at 1.5cm from the fire pit to provide additional seating.

Exit paths are available at each corner and the young people and adults are taught to move around the fire pit in an anti-clockwise direction.

For young people with limited safety awareness an additional safety guard can be placed over the pit, a member of staff will be posted on the patio area when the pit is in use and supporting staff are advised to use the young person's BSP plan.

When the fire pit is in use young people are not permitted to stand on the patio area without permission.

If young people and staff want to change seats, they must walk around the outside of the seating area in an anti-clockwise direction. This will be practised with the students at the beginning of each session and before a fire is lit. Students must not move from their seats when the fire is lit without permission from an adult.

Long sleeves and trousers should be worn around the fire pit. Young people and adult should check their hair and clothing for things that could catch in the fire.

Young people are not permitted to throw anything on the fire.

The wind direction will be assessed at the beginning of each sessions and the forest school leader will advise on seating and rearrange it if necessary. Considerations for seating will be given to students with respiratory needs.

### **Fire lighting**

Training is given to level 3 and level 2 forest school practitioners on the lighting of fires, these are the only individuals permitted to light fires.

### **First aid and safety**

A filled fire bucket, burns kit, fire blanket, cling film and first aid kit will be cited in a rucksack close to the fire pit location.

Only forest school practitioners are permitted to light fires, others can participate under close supervision from leaders.

Fires are lit using a flint fire lighter and natural fuel. Cotton pads and tinder nests can be used in wet conditions.

No flammable liquids can be used to accelerate fires.

No plastics can be burnt.

If fuel needs to be added to the fire this can be done with one to one supervision from forest school practitioners.

Wood must be placed on the fire and not thrown from the side. A fire gauntlet must always be worn, and the hand should not go over the fire.

### **Safe extinguishing of fires**

Fires must always be extinguished at the end of the session. The fire must be doused with water and stirred until the smoke and steam has ceased.

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All fuels should be burnt off to ash, large remains of logs should be separated and broken down.

When ash has cooled (next day) it must be dispersed throughout the area for natural decomposition.



### **Food and eating policy**

Young people and adults should not eat found wild food on the forest school site due to use of pesticides and to avoid confusion with Pica management.

Adult led activities to prepare and eat campfire meals will take place when it is assessed that young people are ready to do this safely. Activities will increase in complexity as they become more experienced.

Staff supporting and leading the students have food hygiene qualifications.

#### **Food preparation and storage:**

- Hands will be washed and grazes covered before food preparation.
- Water and food will be stored in sealed containers with meats stored separately.
- Use by dates will be followed in the usual way.

#### **Handling and eating food:**

- Hand wash stations will be provided, along with a washing up station.
- Young people will be taught to cook using activity risk assessment and guidelines.
- Food will be checked by an adult to ensure it is cooked through.
- Children will be encouraged to sit down to eat around the fire pit.

**Cleaning-** All uneaten food should be placed in bin bags and disposed of at school to avoid attracting vermin, all cooking items will be returned to school and cleaned there.



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## Tree climbing policy

Only mature trees are suitable for climbing, the trees on site suitable for climbing are the Willow, Oak and silver birch (Marked with purple ribbon)

Trees will be checked at the beginning of each session for loose and rotten branches.

The surrounding ground around trees should be checked for hazards and sharp objects.

Tree climbing will take place with 1:1 or 2:1 support and following student BSP guidelines.

Only one child per tree at a time.

No climbing trees in wet and windy conditions

Young people may only climb to a height of 1.5 meters, this is marked on the tree as a guideline.

Suitable footwear must be worn for this activity, wellies and sandals are not appropriate.



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## Additional policies applicable to forest school

Forest school at Meldreth Manor works in conjunction with the following policies and procedures used by the Aurora group at Meldreth Manor School:

Equality and diversity

Child protection and safeguarding policy

Inclusion policy

Anti-bullying policy

Behaviour management policy, students have their own BSP plans and risk assessments for physical intervention that should be read by staff working with them.

Compliments and complaints policy

These policies should be read by any new member of staff during their induction period and are available for viewing by parents/ carers, authorities and other professional on the Aurora website.

[www.the-aurora-group.com](http://www.the-aurora-group.com)

Appendices

**Parental consent form**

Medical Information

Medical information will be obtained from the medical information you provided to Meldreth Manor School. However, if there is further information that you would like to make us aware of that might affect your child's involvement in Forest Schools (e.g. phobias, complaints) or any other allergies (e.g. material, food, medicine, pollen, dust, etc.) Please write below.

Please give the Date of your child's last Tetanus Jab \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Consent for.....

As a parent/guardian of the child named above, I agree to my child participating in the Forest School activities taking place.

I understand that activities may include, walking, craftwork, pond dipping, tool use, flint fire lighting skills, den building, campfire cooking and other related activities. I give my consent for the equipment and tools necessary for the activity to be used by the young person mentioned above. I understand that a strict code of practice for working with children will be followed and all activities will be risk assessed and I will be informed of any extra details of activities that are out of the ordinary pattern.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Name (in print):.....

Relationship to child:.....

### **Checklists**

The following items are needed each time we go to forest school:

Item	Check out	Check out
Fire bucket		
Filled water cannister		
First aid kit		
Burns kit		
Emergency rucksack		
Fire blanket		
Medication passports and asthma/allergy kits		
Sunscreen		
Forest fun bag		
Tool kit		
Lesson plan and risk assessments		

### **Tool and PPE check list**

Item	Check in	Check out
Bow saw (2)		
Sheath knife (2)		
Bill hook (1)		
Wooden Mallet (1)		
Loppers (1)		
Tent pegs (20)		
Tarps (3)		
Scissors (2)		
Ropes (3)		
Fire flint (2)		
Cooking equipment (5)		