

Hanley St Luke's Church of England Academy

Headteacher: Mrs Z Cooper Telephone: 01782 234390 /1 Email: office@hanleystlukes.com Website: www.hanleystlukes.com



Forest School Policy

Date adopted	December 2025
Date reviewed	September 2026
Next review date	September 2027
Headteacher	Mrs Zoe Cooper
Governor/Committee (where applicable)	Mr Andrew Wragg

Our Vision:

Jesus said: 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.'

Promoting *life-long learning*

Developing *life-giving relationships*

Exploring *life-enhancing faith*

Inspiring *life-enriching aspiration*

Opportunities for Life

This policy outlines the organisation, promotion and management of British Values at Hanley St Luke's C of E Primary Academy.

At Hanley St Luke's our Mission is to:

- Promote Christian belief and practice and to encourage the moral and spiritual development of all people in our school.
- Develop in each person a sense of self-worth and the necessary qualities to become a full and valuable member of British society
- Encourage the full academic potential of each child.
- In our school we promote honesty, courtesy, kindness, perseverance and respect. We celebrate all our many differences and diversity, believing each individual is special and valued by God.

At Hanley St Luke's CofE Academy, we are committed to providing a rich, engaging and inclusive curriculum that supports the holistic development of every child. Forest School is an integral part of this vision and reflects our Christian values of care, respect, resilience and curiosity for God's world.

Since September 2025, all children in Years 1–6 will take part in Forest School – a fantastic outdoor learning experience that we are delighted to offer.

What is Forest School?

- Forest School is an outdoor learning approach where children explore nature and learn through hands-on experiences in a woodland or natural environment. Learning is child-centred and encourages curiosity, creativity, independence and confidence through exploration, play and supported risk-taking.
- Forest School sessions are progressive, building on skills and knowledge year on year, and are designed to nurture a lifelong love of learning and the natural world.

Early Years Outdoor Provision

- Our Early Years children have access to a high-quality outdoor learning environment all year round through continuous provision. Outdoor learning in Early Years supports physical development, communication and language, social skills, curiosity and wellbeing, and lays strong foundations for the Forest School approach as children move through the school.
- This regular access ensures that children become confident, capable and enthusiastic learners in outdoor environments from the very start of their school journey.

Aims of Forest School at Hanley St Luke's

Our Forest School programme aims to:

- Develop resilient, confident and independent learners
- Foster a love of nature and environmental awareness
- Encourage curiosity, creativity and problem-solving
- Support physical and mental wellbeing through outdoor activity
- Build positive relationships, teamwork and communication skills
- Promote perseverance and confidence through challenge and exploration

Organisation and Delivery

- All children in Years 1–6 will participate in Forest School.

- Each year group will take part for half a term.
- Sessions will take place on Monday and Tuesday mornings, starting with Year 1 in September.
- Each session will last 60 minutes.
- Children will work in groups of 15.
- While one group attends Forest School, the remaining children will take part in focused small-group learning in class with teaching staff.
- Forest School sessions are planned, resourced and led by Miss G Franklin, a trained Forest School practitioner.

In the afternoons, Miss G Franklin will further enrich the curriculum by:

- Supporting STEM projects across the school
- Leading the school podcast
- Running additional Forest School sessions for small groups of children

Forest School Curriculum

- Our Forest School curriculum is divided into **four key areas**, which all children will cover each year:
- **Shelter Building**
- **Knots**
- **Geographical Skills and Navigation**
- **Play and Exploration**

Through these areas, children will progressively develop practical skills, teamwork, independence and confidence while deepening their understanding of the natural environment.

Skills Developed

Through regular Forest School sessions, children will be supported to develop:

- Resilience
- Love of nature
- Curiosity
- Confidence
- Perseverance

Forest School Principles

Our Forest School programme is underpinned by the **six key principles of Forest School**:

- **Principle 1:** Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observation and review are integral elements.
- **Principle 2:** Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a meaningful relationship between learners and the natural world.
- **Principle 3:** Forest School promotes the holistic development of learners, fostering resilience, confidence, independence and creativity.
- **Principle 4:** Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to themselves and the environment.
- **Principle 5:** Forest School is run by qualified practitioners who continually maintain and develop their professional practice.
- **Principle 6:** Forest School uses learner-centred processes to create a supportive community for learning and development.

Health, Safety and Risk Management

- Risk assessments are completed for all Forest School activities and reviewed regularly.
- Children are taught how to assess and manage risks safely.
- Clear boundaries and expectations are established at the start of each programme.
- Appropriate adult supervision is maintained at all times.
- Forest School encourages supported risk-taking, helping children to develop confidence, judgement and responsibility.

Clothing and Equipment

To ensure children can fully enjoy their Forest School experience, parents and carers are asked to provide:

- Suitable outdoor footwear (wellies or sturdy shoes)
- Waterproof coat and clothing appropriate for the weather
- If parents wish, children may also bring spare warm clothes that they do not mind getting muddy or dirty.
- Forest School takes place in most weather conditions, as experiencing the outdoors in different seasons is a key part of the learning.

Inclusion and Equal Opportunities

Forest School is inclusive and accessible to all children. Activities are adapted to ensure every child can participate and succeed, regardless of ability or need. We are committed to ensuring that Forest School supports wellbeing, confidence and enjoyment for every learner.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our children and reflects best practice in Forest School provision.

APPENDIX 1

Hanley St Luke's Forest School Agreement

- Stay within the boundary – stay in sight
- Return to the base camp when you hear the duck call
- Ask before doing
- Respect x 4 (each other, adults, environment and equipment)
- Don't climb above head height
- Follow instructions
- Wash hands thoroughly after the session

Food Safety Policy (extract referring to Forest School)

- Forest Schools is an integral part of our curriculum and during certain sessions children are offered hot drinks such as hot chocolate and we use UHT milk for this purpose which is opened fresh for each session. The children are taught how to cook simple foods outdoors, following all health and safety requirements and using only plant based/ vegetarian products.
- All utensils, plates, cups will be checked to ensure they are clean before use.
- Children with allergies are identified prior to commencing the course and their needs catered to ensure their safety and inclusion in the activities offered.
- Fresh food shall be stored as required, in the fridge if necessary and used well within use-by dates.

- Foods to be cooked/toasted/melted during Forest School sessions include: potatoes, peppers, onions, mushrooms, corn on cob, bread, bagels, eggs, cheese, vegetarian marshmallows, chocolate.
- Food shall be handled according to outdoor hygiene (hand wipes), thoroughly cooked and checked by the Forest School leader.
- All foods requiring refrigeration will be stored in a cool box and used within 2 hours.
- Meat, products containing gelatine and products containing nuts will **not** be used.

Behaviour Policy

Good behaviour is positively encouraged at Hanley St. Luke's, with much emphasis placed on courtesy, kindness, respect and safety. We promote good behaviour through praise and reward. At the same time we do all that we can to prevent poor behaviour and bullying, through our school rules: Be Ready, Be Responsible, Be Safe and our values of honest, courtesy, kindness, perseverance and respect.

In our Forest School sessions, we aim to foster independence, increase motivation, build self-esteem, promote respect for each other and the natural environment, promote positive collaborative behaviour and increase awareness of acceptable boundaries and behaviour outside.

In order to achieve this, the Forest School Leader will:

- Be conscious of the need for safety at all times
- Establish clearly defined behaviour expectations
- Be a positive role model for the children and assisting adults
- Encourage positive and respectful relations between all
- Model positive and caring behaviour towards others, the environment and the resources/equipment used

The children will be expected to listen with care to instructions, especially safety instructions and work on developing a positive relationship with other group members, the environment, equipment and resources.

Our full behaviour and anti-bullying policies are on the school website.

Conservation and Sustainability

An awareness of the environment and sustainability are underpinning principles of Forest School. It is extremely important that children are taught to respect the environment and thus learn to feel an appreciation and responsibility for their world. At Hanley St Luke's, the Forest School site is relatively small, which means activity will have an impact on the environment. An Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out by the Forest School Leader to help minimise the impact and conserve the compact, wooded site.

- Activities within the site will be varied and rotated to give areas and give our area a chance to regenerate.
- There are wood bark paths in the Forest School area. These could be maintained with the help of children.
- One of our school values is to be **respectful**. Our children will be taught and reminded not to pick anything still growing.
- The amount of deadwood collected and burnt will be limited as it is an important layer in the habitat.
- Recycled and sustainable resources will be used on our Forest School site.

Weather

Following the Forest Schools ethos of.....‘there is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!’ Children are instructed to dress in warm/waterproof clothing in the winter and covered arms/legs for the warmer summer months. However, Forest School will not go ahead in instances of high wind (Beaufort Number 6 or above – large branches in motion) or during an electrical storm.

Activities may be changed/tailored to the weather (e.g. no fires if strong breeze, tree climbing limited if particularly wet/slippery). If temperatures are extremely low, the Forest School leader will ensure children are suitably dressed and the session is full of motion and activity. We also have access to our Forest School Cabin so sessions can take place indoors if weather is very inclement.

Roles and Responsibilities

Forest School Leader

- To plan and lead all Forest School sessions.
- To ensure planned activities are suitable for children taking part – to enable the children to achieve.
- To take responsibility for discipline during the Forest School Session (in accordance with the Behaviour Policy).
- To have an up to date Outdoor First Aid qualification.
- To ensure that medication (e.g. inhalers/epipens) and appropriate First Aid is available every session.
- To ensure all participants are suitably dressed for the weather/session.
- To ensure that assisting adults understand their role in supporting the principles of Forest School.
- To carry out dynamic daily risk assessments of the site.
- To ensure all Forest School policies/procedures are regularly reviewed according to developing practice.

All other adults

- Before taking part, ensure you have read the Forest School Handbook.
- Before the session takes place, read the plans for that session and refer to related risk assessments.

- Take an enthusiastic and active role in all the activities.
- Demonstrate how to do things, model new skills and share the children's enjoyment of the outdoors.
- Use the tools, ONLY if the Forest School Leader says it is okay to do so. Follow the tool talk/policy and lead by example when handling tools.
- Report any damaged tools to Forest School Leader.
- Be aware of the location of First Aid Kit/Burns Kit/Water bucket.
- Only tend to fire or extinguish in an emergency, or if agreed with the Forest School Leader and if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Stay within the Forest School area and let the Forest School Leader know if you must leave the activity you are supervising.
- You are duty bound, under the Health and Safety at Work Act, to work safely and take responsibility for your own safety, and report or remove hazards as they occur – this means use your initiative.
- Ensure you wear appropriate waterproof clothing and footwear.
- At the end of the session, support the Forest School Leader with tidying away the resources and returning the children to their class teachers.

Responsibilities of children

- Bring appropriate clothing to each session.
- Listen to and follow safety information.
- Follow the Forest School Agreement.

Ratios

Higher ratios of adults to children are in place to facilitate high quality sessions, where children can be exposed to risk in a supervised and supported manner. A minimum working ratio for Forest Schools is 16:2 but a ratio of 12:2 will be applied at Hanley St Luke's. One adult will be the Forest School Leader; the assisting adult will be familiar with and supportive of the principles of Forest School.

Accident/incident

The Forest School leader has received Outdoor First Aid Training and depending on the nature of the accident/incident will respond in the appropriate manner. It should also be noted that the site is within 5 metres of the school building. Help is always close by and easily/quickly alerted. As a general rule this will include:

1. Radio for help (from the other staff member in Forest School site).
2. Tell children to stop what they are doing and put down any tools/equipment safely – sit down. (This will be discussed with the children in first session and referred back to)
3. Staff will radio the office staff for assistance, describing incident and asking for additional First Aid support.
4. Staff to deal with accident/incident as appropriate.
5. As soon as immediate situation under control, one staff member to gather remaining children (sticky elbows) and return to school building.

6. Emergency services will be called for if required, according to usual accident procedure.
7. If the accident/incident directly involves the Forest School Leader or assistant, the remaining adult will follow this procedure from step 2.

Lost child

This is an unlikely situation as the Forest School area at Hanley St Luke's is relatively small, securely fenced and gated. Almost the whole site can be observed from the centre. Both staff members will take head counts, when the children are gathered at appropriate moments. It should also be noted that the site is within 5 metres of the school building. Help is always close by and easily alerted. If a child/children go missing during the session these steps will be followed:

1. The remainder of the group will be gathered together (using the call 'sticky elbows', children taught to go to adult who makes call – emergency linking arms – head-count).
2. Staff will radio the office staff for assistance.
3. These children will be returned to their classrooms by one member of staff (this member of staff will also ask for assistance at the office).
4. Head teacher will be informed.
5. A search of the immediate area will be made.
6. A search of the outdoor school site will be made.
7. An internal search of the school building will be made (beginning with child's classroom).
8. If the child is still missing, the police will be called.
9. Search will continue, until police arrive.
10. Parents will be informed by head teacher.

Loose dog/member of the public

Again, another unlikely situation as our Forest School site is within the school site, which is securely fenced/gated, accessed via card/intercom. Members of the public visiting the school office are unable to make it around to the Forest School site (electronic gates). If either a loose dog/member of public appears during the session these steps will be followed:

Member of the public

1. The office will be alerted via radio/assistance will be requested.
2. If it appears safe to do so, staff will ask the person why they are there.
3. They will be asked how they accessed the area and informed they are not allowed to be on-site.
4. Member of public will be redirected off the premises and accompanied through gate.

5. If person refuses to move, staff will take children back inside the school building (5 metres away).
6. Lock-down procedure may become appropriate at this point.

Loose dog

1. The office will be alerted via radio/assistance will be requested.
2. Children will be calmly gathered together and fold their arms.
3. Children will be encouraged to remain still and quiet.
4. Staff will talk to dog/distract dog – keep it away from children.
5. If it is deemed safe to do so, children will be returned into school building (5 metres away).
6. Dog warden/Police may be contacted, as appropriate.

Daily procedures

Before:

- The Forest School site will be checked prior to its use each day for potential hazards/issues – trip hazards, state of wall, visual check of trees/branches, path condition, littering, animal faeces, rat/vermin activity, weather conditions assessed.
- A session plan will be made and adapted according to conditions, interest of children, abilities. All adults will have the opportunity to see the plan before the session.
- Equipment and resources will be collected, checked and prepared ready to take to site.
- Teachers will be reminded of Forest School session and check children's clothing/remind to get ready.
- Children will be registered by their own class teacher prior to commencement of Forest School session.

During:

- Children will be collected from their classrooms by the Forest School Leader/assistant (carrying wellies) and brought down to the back door closest to Forest School area (Noah's Ark Door).
- Head-count of children.
- Children will go to the toilet.
- Wellies put on by back door/additional waterproofs provided.
- Children to proceed to Forest School area led by staff.
- Once in Forest School area, gate closed until end of session.
- Head-count mid-session.

After:

- Tools will be counted back and checked.
- Tools will be secured back in tool box.
- Head-count at end of session before return to school building.

- Group will enter school building via Noah's Ark door, remove wellies and wash hands thoroughly in Yr5/6 toilets.
- Children will be returned to class by Forest School Leader or assisting adult.
- Tools will be checked over, dried and cleaned prior to storage.

Fire Procedure (campfires/fires)

An important part of Forest School and used within many sessions. The following procedure aims to minimise the risk to all taking part in Forest School at Hanley St Luke's. Children will be instructed about fire safety rules and reminded that they should adhere to them even when there is no fire.

Fire Management

- Fires will only be lit when the children are deemed to be ready (emotionally, physically) by the Forest School Leader.
- Fires will be lit by the Forest School Leader, using a fire stell or matches. Firelighters may be used. Fire lighting materials will be stored in a separate box.
- The fire will be attended by an adult at all times.
- Fires are an important part of Forest School but will only be used when the Forest School Leader feels the group is safe enough before lighting fires with them.
- A 5L water container + bucket will be kept at hand to extinguish fire or in case of burns.
- The Forest School leader holds an Outdoor First Aid Certificate.
- The size of the fire should be kept to a minimum.
- The Forest School Leader is responsible for the fire and will ensure that it has been fully extinguished at the end of the session. Fire area should be cleared, unless for reuse.

Positioning of campfire

Within agreed central area of site, no overhanging trees, a vegetation free zone of 3m, boarded by logs/stones to prevent spread of fire.

Children will be given the following instructions:

1. Walk around the outside.
2. Step into the circle.
3. Never cross the circle.
4. Only approach the fire if requested and supervised by an adult.
5. Use a safe kneeling position when near to the fire.
6. Turn your head if smoke comes your way.

Positioning of children and adults

In a circle around the fire square, seated on the wood bark/gravel floor at all times, at least 1.5m from the fire. Gaps in seating must be evident for escape routes. Wind direction will be considered in terms of seating children.

Fire in the school building

1. In the event of the fire alarm sounding (school building) Forest School children will remain outside.
2. The children will be gathered together (using the call 'sticky elbows', children taught to go to adult who makes call – emergency linking arms – head-count).
3. Children will be taken to their fire assembly points (yard above Forest School site) by the Forest School Leader/assisting adult and handed over to class teacher.

Lock down

In the event of the lock down alarm sounding:

1. Children will remain outside with the Forest School Leader/assisting adult and move to the back of the Forest School site next to wall/shrubs.
2. The office will be contacted via walkie talkie/phone to clarify the situation.

Tool use

1. Tools will be used in a designated area of the Forest School site, under close (usually 1:1) adult supervision.
2. Children not using tools will not be allowed in the tool use area.
3. Tool talks will be given each session when in use and children judged on their individual ability to use them safely.
4. Tools will be used in accordance with their own individual risk assessments.
5. Tools will be stored in a lockable tool chest, which will be kept in the site supervisor's workroom (also locked) when not in use.
6. No tool should be stored dirty. An oily rag should be used by an adult to wipe billhooks, knives, and saws. All covers to be replaced.
7. Tools will be regularly maintained and sharpened as required.
8. Where possible, green wood should be used as it is easier to work with.

Clothing and personal protective equipment

Children will be required to bring specific clothing and footwear in order to be sufficiently protected from the weather, bites, scratches, stings and suitably dressed for our Forest School sessions. PE clothes and warm waterproof clothing are required. A general rule being several layers, which can be removed in warmer weather. A letter is sent out to parents informing them of requirements. Spare outdoor clothing/wellies are held in school.

Winter:

Warm hat	Gloves
Waterproof coat	Waterproof trousers
Wellies	Warm socks
Long sleeved top/thermals	Jumper/fleece
Jogging bottoms/trousers	

Summer:

Sun hat	Sun cream (applied before session)
---------	------------------------------------

Long sleeved top

Trousers/leggings

Wellies

Forest school leaders will ensure all the children are appropriately dressed before heading to the site.

Other equipment and resources

The Forest School Leader will carry the following:

- Mobile phone
 - Walkie-talkie
 - First Aid Kit
 - Burns kit
 - Bin bag
 - Tools/materials as required per session and in accordance with RA
- * Hand wipes
 - * Water (for handwashing and fire safety)
 - * Snacks (cereal bars), drinks
 - * Clothing (spare clothing will be available – most likely sorted before going out to Forest School site)

Sanitation

- All children will be taken to the toilet once collected from their classrooms and before the Forest School session starts, to reduce the need to go during the session.
- As we are close to the school building, toileting inside is possible but will require the other children to down tools, climb down from trees etc, before one of the adults can leave the Forest School site.
- Children will be reminded not to touch their mouths/eyes when we are outside handling materials/equipment.
- Wipes will be included in basic kit taken to each session, and used if required.
- All children will wash their hands with soap upon returning inside after Forest School session.
- Any litter will be collected in a bag, removed from Forest School site and disposed of back in school.

Accusations against adults at Forest School

Will be dealt with in accordance with school policy for accusations against staff members.

Complaints Procedures

Will be dealt with in accordance with school policy for complaints.

Code of conduct for adults at Forest School

Will be the same as the Code of Conduct adhered to by every member of staff at Hanley St Luke's.

Laura Cordon

January 2026