



*Helping people make sense of
their world and reconnecting
communities with woodland
through outdoor adventure.*

Stomping Grounds

Forest School North East CIC



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1.1 What is it?

Forest School is an educational ethos which develops confidence, creativity and communication skills through long term participant led experiences outdoors.

Forest school is a process, not a product which allows children and young people to take managed risks allowing participants to make their own decisions about what they want to learn, how and when. Forest school promotes self esteem, empathy and enjoyment.

Stomping Grounds specialise in long term Forest School programmes, but also offer taster days and one off bushcraft and woodland workshops.

1.2 Who are we?

Stomping Grounds Forest School CIC is based in Gateshead and was established by Sophie Watkinson, experienced teacher and passionate believer in getting communities back to nature. Stomping Grounds run regular Forest School sessions with groups of all ages, focusing on holistic development. Our directors are:



Sophie Watkinson: Level 3 Forest School Practitioner, Outdoor Paediatric First Aid Certificate, full insurance, DBS (CRB) disclosure, L2 Food Hygiene Certificate, PGCE.

Sophie has a proven track record of outstanding (grade 1) delivery in formal education establishments and is committed to bringing this excellence outdoors to inspire children and young people.



Susan Byrne: Level 3 Forest School and Beach School Practitioner, HNC Outdoor Studies, Foundation Degree in Youth and Community, Qualified Mountain Leader, Outdoor Paediatric First Aid Certificate, full insurance, DBS (CRB) disclosure.

Susan has 9 years of experience delivering quality Forest School and outdoor learning across the UK.



Jess Lloyd: Level 3 Beach School Leader, Qualified Early Years and Primary teacher, full insurance, DBS (CRB) disclosure, Outdoor teacher.

Jess has worked with the Wildlife Trust with schools and community groups as an outdoor teacher, and recently began work with the Royal Forestry Society as an education officer.



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We also work with other practitioners on a regular basis, including but not limited to:

Suzanne Powell: Level 3 Forest School trainee, Outdoor Paediatric First Aid Certificate, full insurance, DBS (CRB) disclosure

Sarah Engel: Level 3 Forest School trainee, Outdoor Paediatric First Aid Certificate, full insurance, DBS (CRB) disclosure

Lianne Dixon: Level 3 Forest School Leader, Outdoor Paediatric First Aid Certificate, full insurance, DBS (CRB) disclosure

Julian Briggs: Permaculture expert, tree surgeon, Full insurance, DBS (CRB) disclosure

Sophie Nichol: Forest School assistant, full insurance, DBS (CRB) clearance

Amber Braithwaite: Level 1 Forest School assistant, First Aid Certificate, full insurance, DBS (CRB) disclosure

1.3 What do we do?

We carry out a variety of Forest School work which includes but is not limited to Youth Clubs, Afterschool Clubs, School Groups, Pre School Groups, Birthday Parties and Holiday Clubs.

Some examples of the types of activities we can facilitate include:

Campfire cooking, fire lighting, den building, survival skills, simple foraging, green woodworking, using hand tools safely, woodland games, tree climbing, tree and plant identification and natural art.

We can either use one of our established sites or find a site near you that works for the group. We currently have sites at Brockwell Woods Winlaton, Thornley Woods Rowlands Gill, Woodland in Chopwell, Waterford Park Lobley Hill, Washingwell School Whickham, Mountfield School Kenton and Birkheads Wild at Marley Hill. We will complete a site survey and 3 year sustainability plan in partnership with land owner to ensure appropriate use to minimise impact on the woodland. We can also support you with applications for grants to help fund some or all of the activity.





1.4 Why we do it?

As roaming distances decrease, risk and decision making is removed, screen time increases and continuous assessment shapes learning experiences, the Forest School movement offers an important and effective intervention. As described by the FSA (Forest School Association), regular Forest School sessions enable children and young people to:

- Explore and discover
- Experience appropriate risk and challenge
- Choose, initiate and drive their own learning and development
- Experience regular success
- Develop positive relationships with themselves and other people
- Develop strong, positive relationships with their natural world

Participants of regular Forest School sessions have shown increased motivation, attendance and attainment in other areas of the curriculum. Forest School has also been identified as an effective intervention for those who struggle to achieve in more formal learning settings.





POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

2.1 Admissions

Stomping Grounds offer Forest School experiences to young people and families. Stomping Grounds is open to everybody from all ethnic, religious and social groups. Booking and consent forms to be received before places on courses are reserved.

2.2 Staffing

The Role of the Forest School Leader

- To plan and run sessions, provide resources and risk assess, sharing this information with relevant parties.
- To observe and assess each group and plan subsequent sessions accordingly.
- To model appropriate behaviour at all times and encourage children to develop a greater awareness of their own and other's emotional needs.
- To take responsibility for liaising with all involved parties, producing risk assessments, updating and following policies and procedures, administering first aid, counting and maintaining equipment and tools.
- To ensure that every child is respected as an individual and that bullying is not tolerated and that the rules and guidelines are followed.
- To direct the group to safety in the event of emergency.
- To build an environment where learning, fun and enjoyment are allowed to thrive.

Role of the Assisting Adults (e.g. parent helpers, school staff and volunteers)

- To support the Forest School Leader with regard to safety, pastoral care, promotion of well-being and safe delivery of activities.
- To work with the Leader to develop tasks and activities that engage and support all of the participants.
- To support the Leader in case of a first aid incident or other emergency situation.
- To be fully conversant with the Forest School policies, risk assessments and emergency procedures.
- To help to manage and maintain the equipment and tool kit.
- To be willing to provide evaluation of sessions and participants.
- To be a role model.

Role the Parent/Guardian

- To bring the children on time with appropriate kit, clothing and consents.
- To ask their children about their expectations before sessions and their feeling after sessions.
- To inform the Forest School Leader about child's medical conditions or of any changes to such information.



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- To inform about any other factors such as recent problems and worries that might affect child's well-being and behaviour.
- To collect children on time.

Role of the Children (anyone under 18)

- To enjoy themselves
- To behave safely and responsibly in line with Stomping Grounds policies
- To listen to and respond to the group leader with regards to any safety information
- To play within the physical and behavioural boundaries established by the group and the leader

2.2 Equal Opportunities

Stomping Grounds actively promotes equal opportunities in all of its activities. Discrimination because of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, or any other perceived difference will not be tolerated.

Stomping Grounds will actively promote this equal opportunity statement by role modelling and embedding it within delivery.

Any breaches of the equal opportunity statement will be reported to Stomping Grounds management and partners.

Letters to parents/guardians/participants will include information on suitable clothing. Stomping Grounds will keep some spare items of outdoor clothing and waterproof so that all participants can take part in activities.

Under 18s can only take part in activities once a medical and consent form has been read and signed by their parent or guardian.

2.3 Confidentiality

In line with the Data Protection Act, and to ensure confidentiality of participants, Stomping Grounds will:

- allow participant access to personal files, but not those of other participants
- where previously agreed, allow school, parent/guardian or partner organisation access to participants' files
- ensure information disclosed on consent and medical forms is not passed to any third party, unless the safety of a participant relies on such a disclosure (for example in case of medical emergency or safeguarding issue)
- store files containing personal information in secure, locked premises.



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Stomping Grounds will seek permission from parents/guardians, or participants if over 18, to take and use digital photos during sessions. With permission, these images will be used for assessment or marketing (printed material, website or social media). Images will be stored securely. If permission is not gained, photographs will not be taken of that individual during any activity. Parents/guardians or participants can stipulate on their consent forms if they wish to be included in photographs but do not want these photographs published externally.

Personal contact details and medical information gained about participants will only be used in case of emergency or to convey important information about the sessions. Medical and contact forms will be kept in secure storage and will be destroyed 12 months after participation has ended.

2.4 Child protection

In order to promote and protect the welfare of children and vulnerable adults who access Stomping Grounds provision, all group leaders will have up to date safeguarding training.

In the case of a disclosure, leader will:

- listen, not interrupt, not ask questions, not make judgements and not make promises of confidentiality.
- Make a record of what was said, as it was said, and how the participant behaved.
- Sign and date any notes and keep them in a safe and secure place.
- Report concerns to Child Protection Officer attached to school or partner organisation (it is the group leader's responsibility to find out who this is and make a note of their number prior to sessions beginning)
- If CPO not available, contact Social Services Area Team
- Not allow participant to go home if they feel they are at risk of serious harm.

3 Normal operating Procedures

3.1 Equipment

Forest School Leader takes a bag of essential items into the woodland during each visit.

This bag contains:

- First Aid
- Emergency whistle
- Charged mobile phone (check for the reception prior to the session)
- Bin liners
- Forest Schools Folder containing: Handbook including emergency action plan and policies and procedures, register for the day, Risk assessments, medical and emergency contact details (or contact details for a person in possession of these), parental and photo consent forms, permission to use the site, copy of public liability insurance, DBS, First Aid Certificate, FS Leader's emergency contact details



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3.2 Staff to participant ratios

During the sessions the Forest School Leader adheres to appropriate supervision guidelines and refers to the minimum standards for working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. See Tool and Fire policy (4.2 and 4.5) for appropriate ratios for these specific activities

3.3 Before the session

- Equipment and tools are checked and packed.
- Essential items including medical forms are packed.
- Activity items are packed.
- The site is visited to review risk assessments.
- All involved have read and understood the risk assessments.
- The weather conditions are reviewed.
- Necessary equipment is assembled.
- The group is informed about wearing suitable clothing and footwear and it is ensured before the session starts that everyone is appropriately dressed.
- Register is taken.
- All participants are encouraged to use toilet before coming to the site.

3.4 During the Session

- Headcount is conducted on arrival at the Forest School location, whenever the group is brought together and at the end of the session.
- Introductions are carried out if a new group or individuals is taking part.
- The group is made aware of hazards or medical considerations.
- The boundaries for the day are described or walked together.
- Participants are engaged in the development of rules and guidelines for the day.
- Activities are explained.
- Pastoral needs of the group are monitored.
- Safety is ensured throughout by continuously assessing risk and taking appropriate action to reduce or remove any risks found.

3.5 After the Session

- All fires are extinguished appropriately.
- Any tools used during the session are counted and packed.
- Any temporary structures are removed.
- The site is checked and all litter removed.
- All equipment is collected.
- A form of review takes place.
- If required the group is assisted on their way back.
- Evaluation forms are completed.
- Equipment and tools are thoroughly checked, cleaned and correctly stored.



4 Health and Safety

4.1 General Safety

In line with the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA 1974), Stomping Grounds has a legal duty to ensure that people affected by the company (clients, participants and partners) are not exposed to risk of health or safety as far as reasonably practicable.

In order to ensure this, the following steps are taken:

- All activities and sessions are comprehensively risk assessed.
- All staff taking part in activities, including staff from partner organisations, volunteers and other supervising adults including parents will have read and understood each risk assessment before taking part in sessions (available in group specific handbook).
- All equipment is checked on a regular basis by trained staff.
- Accidents and Incidents will be reported on an accident reporting form.
- Safety checks are carried out of each site before sessions commence.
- An appropriately stocked First Aid kit will be kept on site at all times.
- A trained Outdoor First Aider will be on site at all times.
- Appropriate staff to participant ratios will be adhered to, depending on age and needs of participants. These will be reviewed according to group needs, but will at a minimum adhere to LEA and Ofsted ratio requirements.
- Strict tool ratios, appropriate to activity and equipment, will be adhered to.
- Tool work will take place within a designated tool area.
- Knives will be numbered and kept in a locked tool kit.
- Exit routes will be discussed and kept clear at all times.
- The group leader will always carry OS coordinates of location.
- The use of tools and fire will be supervised and monitored as part of a baseline assessment, to ensure activities are safe and appropriate for the group.
- Tools and dangerous equipment will be kept in secure storage and issued with age appropriate supervision and ratios.
- All sites have a no smoking policy.

4.2 Fire safety

Fire prevention measures include removal of litter and debris from site. No flammable liquids or gases will be kept on site.

All equipment used will comply to British Safety Standards.

When group activities include fire lighting, fire gloves will be used by all participants. All participants will be trained in safe fire lighting and maintenance and will be appropriately supervised. No more than 4 participants will gather around the fire at 1 time and each participant will use the 'respect position' to maintain a safe posture. The area around each fire will be cleared of flammable debris and where needed fire bowls will be used to control the fire. All fires will be 'closed down' by the group before leaving the site.



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When participants practice their own fire lighting techniques, they will have appropriate instruction to ensure they have chosen a safe area, have suitably prepared the area with a fire square, water, fire glove and removal of surrounding litter. They will be instructed on safely closing down their fire before leaving. Any additional temporary fire sites used by participants will be double checked by leader for safety before leaving site.

A burns kit, fire blanket and fire buckets will be available at each site where fire lighting will take place.

All fire lighting equipment will be counted in and checked at the end of each session.

4.3 Ticks

Ticks are small, spider-like creatures that feed on the blood of animals, including people. They are usually found in woodlands, grassland, moorland, heathland and some urban parks and gardens. Ticks can transmit bacteria that cause diseases such as Lyme disease, which can lead to very serious conditions if left untreated. Symptoms of Lyme disease can include flu-like symptoms, fatigue, muscle and joint pain. After your child has attended Forest School, carry out a thorough tick check by removing your child's clothes and having a good look and feel for any ticks. Ticks prefer warm, moist places on your body, especially the groin area, waist, arm pits, behind the knee and along hair lines, so look out for anything as tiny as a freckle or a speck of dirt. Young children are more commonly bitten on the head/scalp so they would need to be carefully checked around the neck, behind the ears and along the hairline.

If you find a tick, remove the tick as soon as possible by using a pair of fine-tipped tweezers, or a tick removal tool. Grasp the tick as close to the skin as possible and pull upwards slowly and firmly, as mouthparts left in the skin can cause a local infection. Once removed, apply antiseptic to the bite area, or wash with soap and water and keep an eye on it for several weeks for any changes. Contact your GP if you begin to feel unwell and remember to tell them you were bitten by a tick or have recently spent time outdoors.

For more information, visit:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/552740/Ticksand_ourhealthinfoabouttickbites.pdf

4.4 Food Hygiene

To ensure that all food prepared and shared at Stomping Grounds Forest School is safe, and to avoid contamination or illness, Stomping Grounds staff will follow the following food safety guidelines and should encourage participants to do the same:

- Food will be stored appropriately, according to instructions. Packaging will be checked for dates, potential allergens and signs of damage/spoilage
- Food will be cooked and served within guideline times. Refrigerated food will be stored in a cool box and served within 2 hours. All other food will be served within 4 hours of preparation.



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- Cooking utensils will be thoroughly cleaned before and after each session and will be stored in a 'clean' box with a lid to prevent contamination in the woods.
- Used utensils will be taken away in a separate 'dirty' box.
- Staff and children will wash hands thoroughly before food preparation.
- Waste food will be gathered and removed from the site at the end of the session.
- Allergens will be noted on medical consent forms, which will be checked prior to any cooking or serving of food.

4.5 Emergency Procedure

In accordance with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, Stomping Grounds is committed to its responsibilities regarding first aid. The group leader will carry an emergency kit and have up to date Outdoor First Aid training. In case of emergency, the leader will:

- Assess situation, nature and extent of injury/accident
- Ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised
- Attend to the casualty, giving first aid where necessary
- Record detail of accident or near miss in Accident Book
- Gain signature of parent/guardian to acknowledge actions undertaken by Stomping Grounds
- Notify HSE of any accidents or near misses
- Review policies and procedures and make amendments where necessary

In the case of injury which cannot be treated by first aid, the leader will:

- Contact emergency services via 999 on leader phone
- Notifying the parent/guardian
- Ensure another adult takes responsibility for supervision of the rest of the group
- Ensure the rest of the group is moved to safety
- Arrange for adult to meet ambulance at site entrance and direct crew to incident.
- Arrange for a member of staff or supervisory adult to accompany injured child to hospital
- Update parent/guardian
- Major incidents that are 'reportable' will be reported to the HSE (Health and Safety Executive)

4.4 Missing child

Stomping Grounds aims to encourage exploration and adventure in its participants, but with this sense of freedom comes the risk of straying too far.

To minimise the chance of a participant getting lost, the group leader will:

- Encourage an awareness of the surrounding area through games and discussion
- Agree with participants physical boundaries through the use of games and markers
- Agree with participants specific call or whistle to signify regroup



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In the event of a missing child or participant, the leader will:

- Call participants back to a designated area using a pre agreed call of whistle
- Do a head count against the session register
- Ensure safety and supervision of group
- Conduct search of area
- Call 999 if participant is still missing after 5 minutes. At this point the emergency procedure would be followed.

4.5 Tool safety

- Participants may use hand tools as part of their Forest School Programme.
- Tools will be stored in a designated tool area and all participants will receive a tool talk before using any.
- Gloves will be used where appropriate.
- Tools will be checked and counted in at the end of each session
- Sharps (knives and blades) will be kept in a locked tool box
- Participants will be taught the importance of the 'blood bubble' to ensure safe working distances and practices.
- Participants will be heavily supervised during initial tool use and as part of a baseline assessment. Ratios will not exceed 1:4. After long term provision, it is at the discretion of the leader, and based on observations and assessment, that some participants may be classed as competent at using specific tools and may use them more independently.

5.1 Site policy

Prior to each session, the group leader will carry out the following checks as part of the risk assessment:

- tool maintenance
- review of medical forms
- egress and exit routes
- adverse weather conditions
- site boundaries
- visual site survey to assess for changes or new hazards since initial site survey
- take a register of attendance and do regular head counts throughout session

At the end of each session, the group leader is responsible for:

- removal of all litter and food waste
- ensuring the fire is properly closed down
- all tools are cleaned and stored correctly

The leader will carry an Emergency Kit Bag which will include:



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- Full first aid kit
- Mobile phone
- Risk assessment for the site and activities
- Parental consent forms
- Medical forms
- Survival bag
- Torch

5.2 Removal of litter:

- the site should be left in the condition in which it was found
- no waste should be left by participants, it should be disposed of off-site in line with local authority guidelines
- any food or drink brought onto site should be removed. If participants bring food or drinks, they should be responsible for removing waste
- bags or containers should be provided for gathering waste and removing from site
- leader should check site after participants have left for any waste that may have been left
- no food or litter to be burnt on the fire
- liquids containing pollutants (eg soap, detergent, paint) should be removed from site
- un contaminated liquid waste can be used to put out the fire or disposed of in a dug hole

5.3 Toilets

On sites where available, participants will be shown toilet location and accompanied to the location by a supervisory adult if appropriate.

On sites where toilet facilities are not available, the group leader will:

- Encourage participants to use toilet facilities before coming to the session
- Identity a suitable area away from activity and provide a toilet bag (toilet paper, sanitising gel, nappy bags)
- In some situations, provide a screen (tarp) for privacy
- Encourage wild toileting

5.4 Environmental Policy

It is important to Stomping Grounds that any activity in woodland promotes participant respect of ecology and that human impact of woodland activity is minimal. The following measures will be implemented to model respect and minimise any negative impact.

Activity	Potential damage	Control measure
Collecting deadwood (for fire, art, craft)	Deadwood serves as habitat for mini beasts and fungi.	Reserve areas for deadwood conservation. Visual survey by leader and participants to ensure adequate deadwood is left in place.



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Fire	Changes in soil chemistry, depletion of essential nutrients, increased levels of carbon.	Survey site and soil to find suitable area for fire pit. Plan fire pit rotation into 3 year sustainability plan. Extinguish fires fully before leaving site. Use fire bowl if necessary.
Collecting natural materials	Damage to flora	Limit frequency of activity Encourage groups to take materials from ground cover.
Food waste and litter	May attract animals or certain species, leading to changes in biodiversity.	Provide waste container and remove from site after each session.
Foot fall	Damage to undergrowth	Stick to designated walkways. Rotate paths when working off walkways to minimise prolonged damage.

6.1 Weather

- Stomping Grounds aim to deliver sessions in all weather as long as it is safe to do so.
- Instances of high wind (in excess of 30 mph) will result in cancellation of session
- Where possible, sessions cancelled due to extreme weather will be rearranged to a mutually suitable date.
- In some cases, a refund may be offered, following discussion between SG and client.

6.2 Clothing

- Participants, parents, teachers, volunteers and other visitors to the Forest School site should dress appropriately. Suggestions of appropriate clothing are as follows and are included in registration letters to parents or teachers:
- Warm and sturdy footwear – walking boots or wellingtons with additional thick socks.
- Waterproof jacket and trousers if wet.
- Sun cream and head cover if sunny.
- Additional layers and a change of clothes to help combat cold.
- Gloves, scarf and hat in cooler weather.

7.1 Cancellation

- In the unfortunate event that a session(s) has to be cancelled by Stomping Grounds due to unforeseen circumstances, then an alternative date will be offered.
- Participants will be contacted with as much notice as possible via telephone and email.
- Messages will also be updated on Facebook and Twitter.
- In some circumstances, if previously discussed between client and SG, a refund will be issued.
- If SG or client wish to rearrange a session they must provide at least 2 weeks notice.
- Sessions that have been block booked cannot be rearranged without prior agreement.



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- If a client has paid a deposit for a party or workshop booking and wishes to cancel, they will lose their deposit. This is to cover administration costs and the cost of any resources or materials already purchased by SG.