



Forest School Parent's Information

What is Forest School?

Forest School is a programme of learning based in a natural environment, designed to develop children's self-esteem, independence and confidence through outdoor, child-led play. Sessions are planned to encourage children to participate in engaging and achievable activities to help to develop their personal, social and emotional skills. In Forest School sessions, children are offered opportunities to choose their own learning and follow their own interests, play, build relationships with their peers, solve problems, build their confidence in taking risks and learn new practical skills. Through Forest School sessions we hope to build children's self-esteem, self-worth and sense of belonging so they can approach all learning and future challenges in life with motivation, resilience and positivity.

Clothing and weather

In order for children to get the most out of Forest School sessions, they must be suitably dressed. They will get muddy, so must have old clothes which do not matter if they get dirty. Forest School sessions will go ahead no matter what the weather is. Sessions will only be cancelled if thunderstorms or high winds are forecast in the area.

On Forest School days, children should come to school wearing joggers, a long sleeved t-shirt, warm jumper and trainers, with the following items in a clearly named bag ready for their session:

Summer sessions	Winter sessions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterproof trousers • Waterproof coat • Warm layers if it is a cooler day • Wellies or waterproof walking boots • Sunhat • All-day suncream to be applied at home before school • A change of clothes for after forest school so children can change any wet or very muddy clothes. • A named plastic bag for muddy wellies and clothes. <p>Please note, in summer, wellies, waterproof trousers and light long sleeves are still essential, to protect from thorns, nettles, insect bites etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterproof trousers / ski trousers • Warm, waterproof coat with a hood • Extra pair of tights/leggings/thermals under their trousers on colder days • Warm socks and spare socks • Wellies or waterproof walking boots • Warm hat and gloves • A change of clothes for after forest school so children can change any wet or very muddy clothes. • A named plastic bag for muddy wellies and clothes.

What will the children experience?

Sessions usually begin with a group game to develop social and communication skills. The children will then be free to choose their learning, from many of the resources which will

permanently be on our site, to activities set up specifically for a particular theme. Children love the freedom of Forest School. If they want to swing in a hammock, they can! If they want to make a home for fairies or a den to sit in, they can! If they want to look for bugs, they can! We end our session with an activity to reflect on what we have learnt and plan our next session. This is a list of some possibilities for Forest School learning:

Den building	Treasure/scavenger hunts
Bug hunting	Natural art e.g. clay, weaving
Mud kitchen	Making miniature villages from sticks
Digging in the digging pit	Learning to use tools
Making and using obstacle courses	Learning to tie knots for different purposes
Swinging in hammocks	Campfire building, lighting and cooking

Taking risks

The children's safety is of the utmost importance in Forest School and extensive risk assessments have been completed. The Forest School ethos considers it important for children to experience small, carefully managed risks, such as creating an obstacle course and balancing along it, swinging in a hammock and working out how high they are comfortable swinging, walking on uneven ground, navigating tree roots and bramble patches. These all build children's resilience and ability to manage risks in life.

Tools

Tools will sometimes be planned into Forest School sessions, usually for the purpose of making something, and often with a focus of communication with a partner. Children will be taught the correct way to use tools at Forest School including the safety measures they must take. All tool use will be under adult supervision. Tools we may use include wood peelers, bow saws, palm drills, hammers and loppers.

Fires

Children will be taught to sit at the fire circle by sitting on the logs and swinging their legs over, and to leave the same way, so they are never walking through the fire circle. Fires will be lit during some Forest School sessions. Children may be invited to approach the fire square for cooking or fire lighting but only with adult supervision. Fires will only be lit if the fire safety equipment is present; the Forest School leader will always take the lead during fire lighting and a lit fire will never be left unattended.

What the children say

"I love Forest School because I love looking for newts!" - George

"I overcame my fears and looked up close at a spider. And I ate a s'more for the first time ever!" - Sebastio

"Forest School is my favourite thing because I love getting muddy!" – Arianna

"I love to play with my friends in the hammock" - Eva-Rose

"I am so happy my mum chose this school for me, so I can do Forest School!" - Chevy

"I was so proud learning how to tie a knot! Once I knew I made a limbo line!" - Liam

If you are able to offer your time to help at any of the Forest School sessions, please do get in touch.