



A Parent's/Carer's Guide to 'Woodland Wednesday' at York Road Nursery School

Debbie McAllister
Forest School Leader

Introduction



Some of you may have already heard of the forest school concept and we are extremely lucky at York Road Nursery to be able to use the woodland area at Hitchin Boys' School where the children can play and explore nature. We believe that learning and playing outdoors, whatever the weather and season, is an important and essential experience for all children.

The children will have the opportunity to visit the woods throughout the term, engaging in a variety of exciting and fun learning activities. Being engaged in first hand experiences, the children will be able to investigate, explore and learn to respect all living things. These experiences planned by the leader, teachers and often by the children themselves, is what forest school is all about.

This leaflet will tell you a little bit about our 'Woodland Wednesday' sessions and will hopefully answer any questions you may have about your child's time in the wood.

What is Forest School?

Forest School originated in Scandinavia in the 1950's and is becoming increasingly popular in



schools in the UK. Its philosophy is to encourage and inspire children's learning in an outdoor environment, helping children learn and take care of nature. By being outdoors in the woodland, children will:

- develop their personal, social and emotional skills in a stimulating, safe and natural environment; they will learn about their abilities and how to work together as a team.
- develop their physical skills as they strengthen their bodies by running, climbing, etc.
- explore and develop practical skills such as den building, using tools and lighting fires.
- learn to take risks and manage risks within a safe environment.
- develop their independence, self-esteem and confidence as they learn these new skills.



When will we go and who will be with me?

'Woodland Wednesday' will be held every Wednesday! morning, whatever the weather. (See 'What Will I Wear?'), however in the event of very windy weather the session may be cancelled.

The sessions will be led by Mrs Debbie McAllister, the Forest School Leader, with the children's teachers, LSA's and volunteers helping to support children in their own self-directed learning.

Most of the learning will be child-led with lots of opportunities to encourage questioning, curiosity and exploration, whilst supporting the children to take risks and having **LOTS OF FUN!** The staff will teach physical and behavioral boundaries as well as talking about keeping safe.

The children will also be given the opportunity to reflect on their learning and success with lots of praise and encouragement promoting a 'you can do it' attitude.

What will we do at forest school?



- Following registration and toilet visits, we will walk to our forest school site.
- On arrival, the children will say "hello" to Grandfather Yew and gather around the fire circle where we will discuss safety issues and the forest school rules.
- The children will have the opportunity to freely explore the woodland independently and with the adults.
- Activities will include: Woodland art; shelter building; mini-beast hunts; using our senses; leaf and mini-beast identification; making a hedgehog shelter; fire building; knots and **LOTS, LOTS, MORE!**
- We will have a little snack, sometimes using the fire to cook our marshmallows, etc, followed by further free exploration before returning to the nursery ready for lunch or pick-up.



Keeping Safe in the Woodland

In order to keep our children safe, we will aim to -

- Set clear and safe boundaries.
- We will talk together about the general rules with the aim of there being as few rules as possible. They will be positively worded, for example 'stay within the tape', rather than 'don't go beyond the tape'.



- Plan for a variety of interests and learning styles.
- Support the children in their exploration.
- Encourage independence.
- Encourage children to take supported risks.



What will I Wear?



Part of being outdoors is to experience all seasons and inevitably the British weather! To ensure your child gets the most out of each session please can you ensure appropriate clothing for the weather is provided:

- Suitable footwear eg. wellies, trainers, walking boots.
- Waterproof top and trousers.
- Warm clothing, remember layers can be removed.
- Hats and gloves (winter and summer)
- Sun cream (summer)

All clothes need to be comfortable, practical and warm, eg long sleeved tops will prevent scratching on bushes and as **YOUR CHILD WILL GET DIRTY**, old clothes would be a good idea! Please let your child know that at forest school it is OK to **GET DIRTY** and that you don't mind! Names on clothes would also be useful.

- Because we will be going shortly after registration please can your child come to nursery dressed to go!

Health and Safety

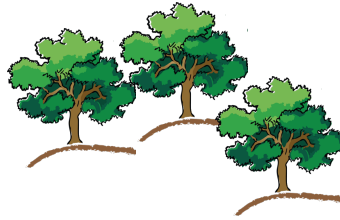
All activities carry risk and forest school is no exception.



On the day of each session:

- the site is visited and a risk assessment is completed prior to each visit.
- The Forest School Leader will have an outdoor qualification in First Aid.
- An emergency First Aid kit and accident record book will be carried with us along with children's prescribed medications.
- In the event of an emergency school policy and procedures will be followed.
- Guidance regarding such activities as tree climbing, stick and stone handling, using tools and fire safety will be discussed.
- Children will be encouraged not to eat anything found in the woodland area and to use wipes/bacterial gel before eating any food.
- Any hazards noticed by volunteers will be reported to the Forest School Leader straight away.

Conservation



Regular use of the woodland area is bound to cause some damage, however during our forest school sessions the children will be taught and encouraged to think about their responsibility and respect for our woodland area and environment. Activities such as snapping off living branches or pulling up plants shall be prevented with explanations about the consequences to the woodland area. At forest school, we will focus on developing children's empathy and care for the wildlife around them and help them to become aware of the bigger environmental issues that may impact our woodland area directly and the world in which they live in.



Look at all the Skills I will develop at
Forest School!

