



A Parent's/Carer's Guide to 'Forest School'

Introduction

We are very lucky at York Road Nursery to have access to a wooded area at Hitchin Boys' School where the children can play, investigate, explore and engage with nature. Each group will have the opportunity to visit the woods roughly every month with a number of fun, exciting activities planned for them by the Forest School Leader and other staff.

What is Forest School?

Forest School originated in Scandinavia in the 1950's and is becoming increasingly popular in schools in the UK. Its ethos is to encourage children to be curious about the world around them, particularly outdoors in a woodland environment, to encourage risk taking and to build resilience and to develop good relationships with each other.

By being outdoors in the woodland, children will develop their personal, social and emotional skills as they learn to work together as a team; develop their physical skills by running, climbing, etc, develop practical skills such as den building; learn to take and manage risks; and develop their independence, self-esteem and confidence as they learn these new skills.



When will we go and who will be with me?

'Forest School' sessions 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 learning. A 'you can do it' attitude will also be promoted with lots of praise and encouragement as a child learns and practices a new skill.



What will we do at Forest School?

- Following registration and toilet visits we will walk to our forest school site.
- On arrival, we 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; 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.

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!

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 of which there will only as few as possible.
- Plan for a variety of interests and learning styles.
- Support the children in their exploration.

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

The children will be taught and encouraged to think about their responsibility and respect for our woodland area supporting them to develop empathy and care for the trees and wildlife around them.

COVID19

At York Road Nursery, we recognise that being outdoors in the fresh air is good for your children and for us. Being in nature helps keep us physically healthy, promotes well-being, boosts immunity and helps build resilience. We are lucky in that the woodland area will make social distancing a little easier as the children explore and have FUN!

In order to minimise the risk of the spread of COVID19, a number of measures have been put into place, subject to change, dependent on the latest Government guidance and local guidelines in the event of a flare up of any localised infection.

The risk assessment is to be used in conjunction with the nursery's COVID19 risk assessment and guidance.



I hope this leaflet has answered any questions you may have about our 'Forest School' sessions. If you have any further questions, please feel free to talk to myself or your child's teacher.

Many thanks
Debbie McAllister
Forest School Leader