



Hollywater  
School

Inspire. Believe. Achieve.



# Forest School Information Booklet for Parents

# Hollywater School Forest School

Welcome to Forest school! This is where the journey begins.....and like any great story we enter slowly through the big brown wooden gate into nature. We go quietly as we start to hear a noise... is it a bird, mouse, fairy or a dragon? The wind whistles by, the leaves start to rustle and the Forest School adventure begins.

Forest School is the place where magic can start to happen as imaginations, self-confidence and vocabulary start to grow. Every visit to Forest School will in the same place, yet the story will always change and be different. The amazing memories and adventures that take place in Forest School will always be enjoyed.



In Forest school all children are given the opportunity to access, experience and enjoy learning while working in the outside environment. We take the “classroom” outside and use the beautiful surroundings, weather and sounds to enhance their learning visually, orally and sensually. This holistic approach encourages children’s imagination, build’s self-esteem and creates the desire to understand, learn and respect the natural world around them.

The children are in a safe environment where they can succeed, create and work collaboratively with others – building relationships. It is through exploration and discovery the children are able to enjoy and self-initiate their own learning.



In Forest School children are able to take calculated risks in a controlled environment. They learn cause and effect and what may or could happen. They are given the opportunity and responsibility under supervision, to use tools and help be part of a team, creating a fire to keep them warm and cook food.

Equality, achievement and self-belief help children to return to the classroom feeling that they can accomplish and succeed in whatever they do. Every child is valued and their input is vital; we work as a team and they are able to respect and treat each other fairly and as equals.



### **1. What is Forest School?**

Forest School is a method of working outdoors with children, young people and adults, using the natural environment to promote social and emotional development. It is an inspirational process that offers all learners regular opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. These learning experiences also help to develop communication and practical skills, as well as a greater understanding of the environment. For more information see the Forest School Association website at [www.forestschoollassociation.co.uk](http://www.forestschoollassociation.co.uk)

### **2. How can Forest School help my child's learning and development?**

It is proven from research that learning that takes place in the outdoors is much more powerful and memorable as all the senses are involved. Forest School helps children develop through a child-led approach and teaches them how to assess risks for themselves. Pupils have the opportunity to take ownership of their learning and the path they want to follow.

### **3. What happens during the Forest school day?**

The children arrive at school in their Forest School clothing and once the class teacher has checked that all the children are wearing the correct attire (see page 6), the class walks to the Forest School area.

Each session begins around the Fire Circle, where we talk through the safety rules for working outdoors and about respecting each other. There will always be a camp fire lit ready to greet the pupils to establish the start of Forest School.

For every session we have a lesson plan which includes a variety of small group activities, all of which are fully risk assessed. The children move around a variety of activities during their session and they are given opportunities throughout the day to huddle up around the camp fire.

Finally, the class returns to the Fire Circle for the close of the session and time for reflection.

#### **4. What sort of activities do the children do?**

Forest School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation. Activities can include:

- Den building – on a large and small scale
- Natural art
- Using knots and lashings to set up site
- Fire lighting and camp fires for cooking / using a Kelly kettle
- Invertebrate hunts
- Scavenger hunts
- Studying wildlife
- Tree investigation and tree climbing
- Climbing and balancing
- Working with natural materials using tools, e.g. making musical instruments, jewellery, decorative items, picture frames, whistles
- Creating insect homes and bird feeders
- Collecting, identifying and sorting natural materials such as leaves
- Sensory activities

#### **5. What tools will be used in Forest School?**

In Forest School the children will learn to use a range of tools including potato peelers and palm drills and when they are competent, small knives and bow saws. The Forest School leader will be the supervising adult when tools are being used and the ratio will be 1:1 during these sessions. The Forest School leader will give the children a safety talk each session and when appropriate will explain how a tool should be used and when it can be used safely. If a child is not using a tool in a safe manner the activity is stopped and safety instructions will again be given.

The Peeler (Potato) is used as a 'Whittling' tool. We only use soft green wood such as Willow and this can then be used to make charcoal for drawings.

Palm Drills allow children to drill through a thin disc of wood and create a hole to thread string or a piece of dowel through to create their own name label.

Gloves are kept on site and can be worn if the child want to or if the Forest School leader feels that the child needs to. Gloves can protect the hands if worn on the bracing (supporting) hand but when working the child needs to feel the object and have a good grip at all times.

All activities using tools are fully risk assessed.

## **6. What is the adult/child ratio?**

All Forest School sessions will be staffed to ensure that all pupils can access all activities safely. The ratios will be identified within the group risk assessment and will be different for each group based on their needs.

However, during an activity where children will be using a tool, the ratio will be 1:1 with the Forest School Leader working with this individual.

## **7. Are there First Aiders on the site?**

There will always be a qualified First Aider on-site at all times.

A First Aid kit is kept on site along with other emergency equipment. If there is an accident the child will be taken into the First Aid area inside the school and parents notified.

A medical bag and an emergency bag will be taken on-site. This will have all the necessary information and medication for all the pupils within the group.

A mobile phone and school radio will be taken to the Forest School site to ensure easy communication with school if needed.

## **8. What about break and lunchtimes?**

The children are given a break mid-morning when they are able to visit the toilet and have their snack and a drink. The children may also visit the toilet at any point during the day after seeking permission from their supervising adult.

At lunch time the children come back into the school to wash their hands and change into clean footwear in order to eat lunch in the hall and have lunch play with the rest of the school.

All water bottles are taken down to the Forest School area and the children are encouraged to drink water throughout the day. During the colder weather the children are given a cup of warm chocolate and an additional snack. During the hotter weather cold drinks and ice lollies will be provided.

## **9. If it's cold or raining will Forest School still take place?**

Forest School takes part in all seasons and all bar very extreme weather conditions. We have a range of tarpaulin's that can be used to create lots of shelters within the site as well as to cover the floor.

Before the Forest School session starts the children are reminded of the importance of telling an adult if they are cold or wet. During the session the children are carefully monitored by the supervising adults who are aware that some children will not speak out, and so are vigilant as a team to look out for signs of a child being cold or unhappy. If a child has managed to get wet, then the supporting staff will take them back into school to change them into their spare clothes or to borrow clothes from school if necessary.

## **10. What about during hot weather?**

During the summer months the children will need to be wearing hats and bring in sunscreen that they can reapply during the day. We will encourage them to drink plenty of fluids and there will be frequent drink stops throughout the session.

We are aware of the lack of shade on the site so the Forest School leader will build shelters to keep the children out of the sun, so that they can still enjoy the activities outside. In addition, the children may need be given an ice lolly during the session to help keep them cool.

## **11. I have no waterproof clothing or wellies for my child!**

If you do not have all the correct clothing for outdoors, then we do have some spare items in Forest School so please speak to the class teacher. We make sure all children are wearing the correct clothing before we go outside. No child will be permitted to go outside if their clothes are not suitable for the conditions (see page 6 for suitable attire).

## **More questions?**

If you have any further questions or concerns, however small, please speak with the class teacher or the Forest School leader, Sarah Kitching, who will be happy to discuss these with you.

## **Suitable Clothing for Forest School**

The children will be outside in varying weather and will need the appropriate clothing for the conditions and also possible changes of clothes. The children will need to come to school dressed in their Forest School clothes, remembering to bring their indoor shoes with them as they will still eat their lunch indoors.

### **...for the cold weather**

- Hats and gloves
- Jumper/fleeces (with warm under garments)
- Warm socks (and some spare socks)
- Wellington boots ( warm – additional socks if needed )
- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat with hood
- Long sleeved top
- Full length trousers under waterproofs
- Warm socks and a spare pair

### **...for the hot weather**

- Sun cream protection
- Sun hat (preferably one that offers protection to the back of their neck)
- Sensible sturdy close toed shoes.
- Preferably covered legs (no shorts) - full length trousers
- Spare socks
- Wellington boots
- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof coat with hood