

Information for Parents

What is Forest School?

Forest School originated in Scandinavia and was brought to the UK in the early 1990s. Sessions are always **child led** (to foster independence), **long term** (to build trust and relationships) and **outside** (to gain the many physical and emotional benefits from being in nature). The Forest School ethos aims to promote students' confidence, social skills, sense of self-worth and emotional well-being in an outdoors environment.

Students are not taught, but are encouraged to find things out for themselves through play i.e. games, stories, creative expression and sharing. Through play the child develops their initiative and imagination (problem solving), learns resilience and resourcefulness (perseverance and determination), how to give and ask for help and support from peers (emotional intelligence and teamwork), and how to appropriately self-manage risk in an increasingly risky world.

It is important to recognise that Forest School is **not** simply an outside classroom or a nature lesson. There is no written academic work and no tests or exams.

Whilst Forest School has its roots in early years (it is generally accepted that this is when children learn best), other programmes for older children, teenagers and even adults are equally valuable, and can help to remedy what has been missed in early childhood or gone wrong since.



What happens in Forest School?

Activities are provided during a forest school session but the emphasis is on the children choosing what they do. Activities might include den building, cutting firewood and fire building, crafts such as dream catchers or whistles, games, rope swings, flora and fauna ID as well as stories and sharing.

The obvious benefits of improved coordination and physical health from doing activities outside, are enhanced by opportunities to develop imagination and initiative; problem solving and perseverance. Children are encouraged to try things out and learn from experience, rather than rigidly following a set of instructions. This often involves learning to work as a team to get something done, feeling comfortable with asking for and offering help and learning how to cope with failure or setbacks. All crucial emotional skills to take with them into the adult world.

You've mentioned children learning to self-manage risk, how do I know my child will be safe?

All Forest school sessions are led by a Level 3 qualified leader with an outdoor paediatric First Aid qualification (renewed every 3 years). Assistants will have a minimum of Level 1 Forest School training, or have been inducted by the Forest School leader. Green Light Trust provide a minimum of two adults to every eight children (1:4) 3-8 yrs of age. For over-8s – a minimum of two adults for the first 8, then one for every additional 10 children. All staff and helpers are CRB checked.

All activities are risk assessed. The site and weather on a daily basis. Dynamic risk assessments continually take place throughout each session.

High ratio of adults to children mean staff can observe without interfering, but still be able to step in quickly if an activity looks like it is becoming unsafe.

We always ensure that if one child has a problem or needs to be removed from the site, there are sufficient adults remaining for activities to carry on safely.

We have a composting toilet at our Green Light Trust Frithy wood site and fresh water is always available for hand washing.

There are strict rules around the camp fire and an adult is always present whilst the fire is lit.

How long will sessions last?

Sessions will vary, sometimes lasting a whole day, but will typically take place over a morning or afternoon, so around 2-3 hours.

What should children wear? / How dirty will they get?

This is a very good point. YOUR CHILDREN WILL GET DIRTY!

There is no such thing as bad weather – only inappropriate clothing

As long as the leader deems it safe, children are encouraged to get as messy as they like. Many children and young people miss out on experiential learning because they are overly concerned with getting dirty or spoiling their clothes. You can help them overcome this by making sure that they wear old clothes that they don't have to worry about.

Forest School happens in all weathers (unless extreme and deemed unsafe by the leader) including snow, rain and heat. With this in mind please send your child in appropriate clothing for the weather. Layers in winter ideally with waterproof trousers, wellies, hats and gloves are the order of the day. In summer sun hats are important. Please bear in mind that even though it might be hot, sturdy footwear and lightweight clothing that will keep limbs protected from stings, scratches and ticks (please see separate leaflet), and enable ease of movement will be more appropriate than sandals and summer dresses.

We have some protective clothing which we are happy to lend out, but children are usually far more comfortable if they have their own Forest School set of clothing.

How will we know if Forest School is cancelled?

As Forest school happens in all weathers it is unlikely that it will be cancelled unless there is a staff shortage or very severe weather. We will endeavour to give parents 24 hours notice.



PARENTAL CONSENT

I have read the attached Parent Information Leaflet and give my consent for (name of child):

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to participate in Forest School sessions with Green Light Trust.

Emergency Contact Details

Name/relation to child:

Telephone:

Alternative contact name
and relation to child:

Telephone:

Medical information

Allergies (eg wasps, hayfever etc. **please inc food allergies** eg nuts, strawberries), and medical conditions (please include any medication your child is currently taking)

Doctors name and telephone number:

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Any other information you would like us to know / feel we should know:

Please tick box if you are **NOT** happy to give consent for photographs to be taken

Signature of parent:

date: