



Forest School Information for Families

Introduction

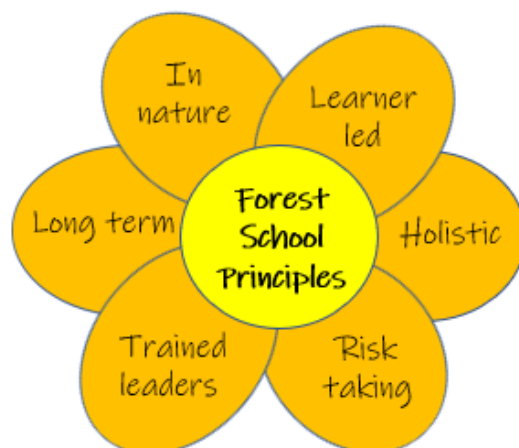
The purpose of this booklet is to give you some detailed information on Forest School sessions. The sessions will give your child the unique opportunity of experiencing play and learning in nature. If you have any questions please ask us, we want to share the enthusiasm we have for this new venture with you. We also have a Forest school handbook which contains all of our detailed policies and procedures. This is available to you to read and is kept with the other school polices in the school office.

The Ethos Behind Forest School

Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults regular opportunities to achieve, and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment.

The 6 Principles of Forest School

- Forest School is a long-term process with frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural wooded environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaption, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.
- Sessions take place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learning and the natural world.
- It aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- It offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- The session is run by qualified Forest School Practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.
- It uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.



Forest School site

The sessions will take place on our school grounds in our ever-developing forest school spaces. The sessions will be held on Thursdays with the children in small groups. We are fortunate to host a range of nature on our school grounds, such as rabbits, squirrels, as well as an abundance of bird species.

Staffing and ratios

15 children will be taken for each session alongside 2 members of staff minimum.

The sessions will be led by Mrs Jennings who has completed her qualification in forest school leadership. Mrs Jennings is first aid trained and will be supported by Mrs Kennedy who holds a current up to date DBS check.

What the children need to bring

It is imperative at Forest School that children are dressed appropriately for all weathers and come prepared for unexpected weather changes.

If your child arrives without appropriate clothing, they will not be allowed to take part in the session.

Kit List

- **Wellies, walking boots or trainers-** sandals and snow boots are not suitable. Warm socks and a spare pair (for cooler weather) please send your child to school wearing trainers with their wellies in a separate bag. These additional items should remain in school.
- **Warm layer in winter** – vests, socks, thermals it is much better to have several thinner layers than one thick layer
- **School PE T shirt and hoodie** (Can be plain Navy T Shirt)
- **Navy joggers/ leggings** (Plain no logos)
- **Good quality waterproof coat (with a hood) and trousers** – the children will be out for up to 2 hours. So keeping warm and dry is a way to have more fun.
- **Warm hat and gloves** – in winter the children will need a pair of gloves and a spare pair in case they get wet.
- **Sunhat and Sun cream-** when it is sunny even though we have coverage from the trees the greenway is quite open.

Please remember to label all clothing



What will the children be doing at Forest School?

Whilst at Forest School the children will enjoy a range of activities as well as closely supervised unstructured play. Each session will have a plan. However, the plans will be kept open and fluid so they can very much be guided by events, and by what the children want to do as each forest school will be unique.

Examples of the types of structured activities the children will do are:

- Shelter building
- Natural arts
- Story telling
- Tree and leaf recognition
- Animal tracks
- Crafts
- Bug hunting
- Tree/log climbing
- Natural crowns



After the initial sessions have run the children will be encouraged to

- Fire lighting
- Cooking
- Safe tool use.

Making the most of the unique resources available by using lots of natural materials, working (with appropriate adult supervision) tools and fires and encouraging high levels of independence and teamwork. Forest school sessions will follow a pattern that the children will feel comfortable with. We will begin with getting to know our outdoor areas, our boundaries and what keeps us safe. Typically, we will introduce a new activity for each forest school session. They will range from bug hunting, making dens, discovering different textures and making our own artwork.

The forest school leaders will ensure that the programme for forest school is fun and of educational value.

Risk Assessments and safety information

The forest school handbook contains the risk assessments for the forest school and its activities. These will be updated as necessary to take consideration of seasonal change/conditions. In addition, the site will be assessed before each session starts.

The health and safety of the children and adults is paramount at all times throughout any activity and session. Safety practice is reinforced through regular reminders for example “123 come to me” is used to regroup the children and do head counts.

An integral part of the forest school experience is that children will experience the outdoors in all weathers. With the exception of high winds and thunderstorms, please assume that your child will be outside when they take part in Forest Schools, even if it is a shortened session. We have a large amount of risk assessments and a handbook in place, which you are welcome to read through. Our policies reflect the school policies and are adapted for the Forest School environment.

Tool use

Using a small hand tool is an important part of Forest School as it enables the children to develop new, practical skills that help them to develop self-confidence. Over time, the children will learn to use various tools such as vegetable peelers (for whittling) bush craft knife and a bow saw.

An inventory of tools will be maintained and all tools will be checked, cleaned and stored in a secure box at the end of a session to ensure they remain safe to use.

Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of each session for the children to understand and ask questions.

Fire safety

A small campfire is an integral part of all Forest Schools. We will occasionally use a fire for some sessions usually at the end of sessions. Fire safety is therefore an extremely important aspect of the Forest School. The key points on fire safety are:

- Fire will only be lit in the designated area.
- The fire area will be enclosed by a square of logs or large stones to prevent the spread of fire.
- Children are seated in a log circle. 1.5 meters away from the fire. Children are not allowed to walk across the circle, if they get up to move, they step back out of the circle and walk around the outside.
- Fires will only be lit by an adult; Children may be allowed to feed the fire under 1:1 supervision and following strict rules.
- Fire will always be supervised by the Forest School leader when lit and will never be left unattended.
- There will always be a fire bucket of water and a fire blanket by the fire circle.
- The children will be taught and reminded of the log circle rules from their first visit to Forest School:

Stand behind the log. Step over the log and sit down on the log Stand up, turn around and step over the log.

Cooking and eating

The following principles will always be followed:

- Everyone should wash their hands before handling food and drink (using anti-bacterial wipes and gel)
- All food is stored in an airtight container
- Only clean equipment is used
- All staff are aware and have a copy of special dietary needs of children with food allergies and any medication will be in the forest school leader's bag.
- Food will be cooked correctly
- All equipment and waste are cleared away

In case of emergency

If there is an injury to adults or children:

- The staff who are not involved in the first aid will ensure the safety of the other children in the group.
- Emergency services will be alerted if necessary
- Accident forms will be completed, and you will receive a copy
- Parents will be informed. It is **essential** that we have up to date contact details for all parents/carers and all emergency contacts.

Environmental consideration and conservation

One of the principles of Forest School is promote environmental awareness. The children are taught about respect and responsibility of the world around them. Both the children and adults are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them.

We will also promote the respect for wildlife. Each child will be responsible for their own rubbish from snack to teach them the impact on the wildlife and our environment. We also encourage children not to pick flowers/plants/trees, due to safety and environmental consideration.

Where possible, and if appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our Forest School site.

Things to remember:

- Children will be tired, especially in the early weeks of starting Forest School. But children are resilient and will gradually take it in their stride
- They may get wet or muddy but can be dried
- They may get stung by insects or nettles etc...
- They may get minor bumps and scrapes during their adventures

- There is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing.

Finally, we hope your child enjoys their time at Forest School and has an amazing time making memories that will last a lifetime.

Forest School Permission Form

Name of child.....

I agree to my child to take part in a Forest School session. The sessions will be led by a Forest School leader. I understand that my child will have to bring their own outdoor clothing and footwear for the session.

I understand that my child may, at an appropriate level, have the opportunity to work with hand tools and small fires through the course of their forest school session.

I have read the parent information and understand that the woodland area contains natural hazards such as stinging nettles, thorns etc. Therefore, my child may occasionally get small bumps, scratches and scrapes.

Please sign below that you are aware of the increased risk of minor accidents and that you agree to the administration of First Aid:

Name of Parent/Carer..... Signed.....

Date.....

Photographs.

I give permission for my child to be photographed whilst at Forest School and these to be used for display in the setting and shared on the school website and parent APP.

Yes/ No

I confirm that the medical information held by school is fully up to date.

Yes/ No

Insect stings

As a precaution, we are required to ask you in more detail about allergies and insect bites (please tick)

My child has **never** been stung by a wasp/bee

My child **has** been stung by a wasp/bee and made a normal recovery

My child has been stung by a wasp/bee and had an **allergic reaction**.

(If you ticked the last statement, we will get in touch with you to get further details)

I give permission for my child to have insect repellent applied if necessary

Yes/ No

Allergies

My child has the following food allergies:

Data Protection

All information provided is covered by the Data Protection Act 1998 and is strictly confidential. I understand and agree to the above being held by St Marys Catholic Primary School

Forest School Hospital Treatment Permission Form

Name of Child.....

In the event that your child should require hospital treatment, we require the following information:

We will always contact parents and families if hospital treatment is needed.

Child's name:	
Date of Birth:	
Home Address:	

Parent/Carer names:

Day time Telephone No: 1 2	Work No: 1 2
Mobile No: 1 2	<i>(Please state which number is best to contact you during the day.)</i>

Name of Doctor:

Address:

Is there any medical attention you would **NOT** like your child to receive, or anything that we should make the hospital aware of?

I give permission for my child to receive medical attention as needed whilst in the care of a representative from the Forest school

Signed Print name

Date.....