



Forest School

Information Booklet for Parents

East Preston 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 and down into the deep, deep, deep Forest. We go quietly as we start **to hear a noise... is it a bird, mouse or a dragon?** The wind whistles by and the adventure in the Forest begins.



Forest School is the place where magic can start to happen as imaginations, self-confidence and vocabulary start to grow.

Every visit to the Forest will be to 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 imaginations**, **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 use Maths and Literacy skills without them even realising it!

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 what 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.

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 Schools helps children develop through a child-led approach and teaches them how to assess risks for themselves.



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 7), the class walks down 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.

For every session we plan a variety of small group activities linked to the **term's** topic. The children move around a variety of activities throughout the day and are given opportunities throughout the day to huddle up around the fire circle if it is lit.

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

4. What sort of activities do the children do?

Activities are linked to the topic that the children are covering that term. Typically, these may include:

Music - keeping a pulse or copying a rhythm pattern by beating sticks together, learning songs and singing as a group

Design Technology- Building dens and bridges that are suitable for them to sit in and walk on, whittling wood, making wooden disks

Science - learning about trees, plants and minibeasts



Literacy - Story telling around the fire, Writing, following instructions and creating story maps with natural objects.

Maths - Data handling, Measuring, Shapes and Problem Solving

Art - creating 3D pictures or sculptures out of clay or mud, colour matching and making our own charcoal to draw with!

Computing - following algorithms (a set of instructions to solve a problem)

5. What tools will be used in Forest School?



In Forest School the children use the same tools that they use in school as part of the Design Technology curriculum. These include potato peelers, 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 no more than 1:6. 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.

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.

Gloves are kept on site and can be worn if the child wants to or if the Forest School leader feels that the child needs to. Gloves can protect the hand 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?



As a minimum the ratio is 1:8. For a class of 30 children there is typically a Teacher, the Forest School Leader, a Teaching & Learning Assistant and a Learning Support Assistant.

However, during an activity where children will be using a tool, the ratio will be a minimum of 1:6 with the Forest School Leader working with this group.

We always welcome additional pairs of hands so if you would like to support the class on Forest School

Day then please speak with the class teacher well before the day to enable for planning.

7. Are there First Aiders on the site?

We always have a minimum of 1 Teaching & Learning Assistant - First Aider, 1 Learning Support Assistant - First Aider and The Forest School Leader - Wilderness First Aid Training.

A First Aid kit is kept on the site as well as a First Aid Burns kit, Fire Blanket and Water to extinguish fire. If there is an accident the child will be taken into the First Aid area inside the school and parents notified if appropriate.

Asthma pumps are taken down to the forest area for the duration of the session and are supervised by a Teaching & Learning Assistant.

8. What about break and lunchtimes?

The children are given a break mid-morning when they are able to visit the toilets 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.

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 are very fortunate in having our wonderful Forest School classroom (Solar Dome). If weather conditions are poor the Forest School Day will take place between the Forest School classroom and the actual classroom inside the school (we have invested in large tarpaulin's which we use to cover the floor).



10. What if the children are cold or wet?



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 day 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 Teaching & Learning Assistant will take them back into school to change into their spare clothes or to borrow clothes from school if necessary.

11. 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 drinks stops throughout the day.

We are aware of the lack of shade on the field and in the Forest School area 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 to be given an ice lolly during the day to help keep them cool.



12. 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 including a very large range of wellington boots and waterproof trousers and jackets 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 7 for suitable attire).

More questions?

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

Suitable Clothing...

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
- Waterproof clothing
- Coat



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)
- Spare socks
- Wellington boots
- Waterproof clothing
- Jacket

