

FOREST SCHOOL



ST PETER-IN-THE-FOREST
CHURCH & COMMUNITY CENTRES



"The best classroom and the
richest cupboard is roofed
only by the sky"

MARGARET MCMILLAN

Contents



Why Forest School.....	3
How We Teach.....	
Risk Taking.....	4
The Learner Experience.....	5
Forest School Rules.....	
Our Outdoors Code.....	
What happens in a Forest School Session?.....	6
Before each session.....	
During the session.....	
After the Session.....	
Essential Kit List.....	7
Clothing Requirements.....	
Toileting at Forest School	8
Use of Natural Materials	8
Survival Skills.....	9
Shelters.....	
Fires.....	
Our Site.....	10
Policies and Procedures.....	11
Designated Person Responsibility.....	11
Pricing.....	12
Additional Fees.....	
Discounts Available.....	
Booking and Enquiries.....	



Why Forest School

Forest Schools are rooted firmly in the theories of the progressive thinkers of the last 100 years and beyond. Steiner, Vygotsky, Montessori and Gardner are just a few of the pioneers that have created an education model where the children are at the centre of their own learning.

Forest schools encourage children to discover their own passion for learning in the greatest classroom available to us. The children who attend our forest school will have fun and engaging experiences in an environment that enables them to learn at their own pace.

How we teach

The Forest School approach to learning can be summarised in four statements creating the acronym LEAF:

Learner Led: The learners are at the heart of everything we do, they're given agency in their own learning, and are involved in the planning of sessions, given the option to opt out of an activity and provide feedback for alternative activities.

Experience focused: Unlike classroom teaching, Forest School is all about the experience not the activity. When completing a task (like making a bow, shelter or fire) it is about the process not the end product. If a task is completed safely then that's a success.

Adult guidance: The role of the leader is to facilitate any experience to occur and assist in learning where necessary. The only time it is encouraged that a leader step into a situation uninvited is where there is a safety concern, always taking a gentle approach of understanding and compassion.

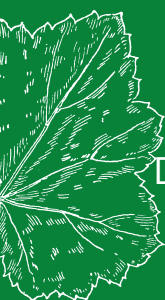
Forest setting: All of these experiences should take place in a forest, woodland or at least an outdoor setting. Taking participants away from their normal learning environment encourages spontaneity, creativity and free expression.



Risk Taking

Risk taking in development is key to creating a well-rounded person, knowing when risks are justifiable is vital in decision making. Where opportunities to take sensible risks is absent in childhood it leads to young adolescents who aren't able to make logical decisions when a risk is present. Norwegian research in 2010 categorised risk in to 6 states:

- Great Heights
- Great Speeds
- Dangerous tools
- Near dangerous elements
- Rough-and-Tumble play
- Getting lost



During a Forest School programme these are seen regularly:

- Great Height – tree climbing, rope swings
- Great Speeds – running games, races
- Dangerous tools – supervised use of craft, gardening and woodwork tools such as saws or drills.
- Dangerous elements – learning survival techniques such as starting a fire, navigating uneven terrain, crafting and using bows & arrows.
- Rough and Tumble – not really encouraged but acknowledged as a part of children's natural play and inevitable aspect of certain tasks.
- Getting lost – leading explorations, recalling journeys, escape and evade.



In the minds of the children there is great risk in many of these as they're unaware that extensive risk assessments have been carried out, they're supervised and thoroughly scrutinised to be safe.

A child may not be perceptive of potential risks and danger in their surroundings, for this reason before embarking to activities the leader encourages an internal risk assessment exercise with the child, with facilitating questions to guide the child through considering potential hazards and taking appropriate measures to mitigate them.





The Learners Experience

Forest School Rules

In line with The Red Balloon Foundation's Behaviour Policy we have 3 overarching concepts that act as the pillars of every session and create a baseline of expectation, these are referred to as the three Bees:



- Be safe
- Be Focused
- Be Respectful



Our Outdoors Code

In addition to these basic rules the outdoor code explains in more depth the safety measures to keep the children safe and well:

- Look after your Forest School
- No pick & No Lick
- Stay within the boundary
- Plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave the property/land as you find it (close gates behind you)
- Leave no trace (take all litter home and protect the plants)
- Consider other people and other dangers





What Happens in a Forest School session?



Before each session

Forest School takes place in any weather, with the exception of very severe weather which would put the safety of staff and children in danger. The Forest School Leader will check the weather before the coming group leave for the site (and advise the group leader from the school if necessary).

Before each Forest School session there will be a thorough safety sweep of the site in line with the risk assessment to ensure there are no hazards to be found and removed. Natural hazards will also be taken into account and some activities may be modified in light of what is found as many natural hazards cannot be removed in the same way as rubbish is.




During the Session

Once everyone is counted the session begins by heading to Base Camp where Forest School rules and safety issues will be discussed with the children. There will be an icebreaker listening activity and the activities planned will be introduced. Children are then invited to choose activities and adults observe and assist only if necessary or explicitly asked.



Depending on the activities chosen we may move to a different activity site (there are three main activity sites that we use outlined in this document) If we are using site number two (a glade in Epping Forest) we will walk to the site and talk about the boundary with children before letting them start any activity.

There will be water on offer for children throughout the session for hand washing and drinking. Before the end of each session, children will have the opportunity to attend the fire and be offered refreshments, including hot chocolate. During this time, we will lead a reflective activity and talk about the following weeks activities.



After the session

At the end of each session, everything will be packed away, tools counted and stored in their designated boxes. The supporting adults should do a final head count before leaving the site. The session leader will then return equipment to storage and ensure any fires are safely extinguished. Before the next sessions starts tools and equipment will be checked over for cleaning, repair and general upkeep.






Essential Kit List

Clothing Requirements


All children and adults must wear:

- Long trousers
- Long sleeve top
- Wellies/walking boots
- Waterproof trousers
- Waterproof jacket



Seasonal clothing:

- Woolly hat or sun hat
 - Gloves
 - Fleece/jumper
 - Spare socks Where Identified as necessary (i.e. those under the age of 5)
 - An emergency set of clothes which include spare underwear and socks should be taken, with plastic bags for dirty/wet clothes.
- 

In every session and for every activity the following kit will be carried by the Forest School Leader:

- Register of children
 - Emergency contact details and numbers
 - Medical forms completed for each child and adult
 - Mobile phone
 - Protective gloves
 - Full outdoors first aid kit
 - Wet wipes
 - Sun cream
 - Newspaper
 - Matches (for fire lighting only)
 - Drinking/Cleaning water bottle
 - Sleeping bag/thermal wrap
 - Map/plan of site and area
 - Essential first aid documentation
 - Carry bags for clean and/or wet clothing
- 

In all situations a number of PPE items will be available at the activity site:

- Hi-vis jackets
 - Safety gloves (different gloves for different tasks)
 - Safety goggles
 - Fire safety equipment (including gloves, blanket and bucket)
- 
- 



Toileting At Forest School



Before and after each Forest School session, children will use the toilets to minimize any toileting needs during the sessions. At Site 1 there is a toilet block for the children. If necessary, adults will use toilets inside of St Peter-in-the-Forest church building.

At Site 2 There is a toilet in the Peterhouse Centre.


For Site 3, due to the locality to our main site we will encourage children to return to Site 1 with one of the attending adults to use the toilets there. For any toileting needs and accidents, staff will follow the Early Years Toileting and Intimate Care Policy which can be found on our website.



Use of Natural Materials

A lot of our experiences talk about how natural materials (woods, grasses etc.) can be used to make items. These often involve the use of hand tools. During such sessions appropriate tool safety is vital. Tool Talks are given whenever a tool is used and supervision (maximum 1:2) will be given. Leaders will take opportunities (often as part of the tool talk) to demonstrate the safe use of the tool, as well as demonstrating different stages of the craft being completed so there are visual elements for learners to take in too.

These crafting activities form part of the spiral curriculum that Forest School champions, where the iterative process of creating a specific tool or item is rewarded and different outcomes are treated as a success of equal measure. Additionally, at Forest School the focus is always on the way a task is completed rather than the finished product. For example, if the group are attempting to make a wooden spoon from some foraged wood, and someone is finding it difficult and ends up making a spatula or changes it to a different product entirely they are still worthy of praise and encouragement. As long as they are doing so safely and using the tools correctly.



Here are some of basic items that can be made in either a single session or over a number of weeks:

- Mallet
- Tent Pegs
- Wooden Badges
- Staffs
- Walking sticks
- Bows and Arrows
- bug habitats
- Bird boxes



Survival Skills



These can be divided into two forms, shelters and fires.

Shelters will keep a learner dry (shelter building can be used to create a dry space to do other forest schoolwork in wetter months). Fires can help keep a learner warm, a place to prepare food/drink and a way to warn off potential predators (should the learners use their skills away from Forest Schools).




Shelters

There are a number of different shelters that can be made, we normally start with the simplest, a Low A-Frame Shelter.

From there, a range of different shelters can be developed, including High A-frame, Kit shelters, envelope shelters, double walled shelters and lean to shelters.

These shelters all make use of a tarpaulin and are also a great opportunity to teach young people about a number of knots, lashings and hitches which come in handy in other areas.

In addition to tarpaulin shelters, natural shelters are also a fun and often important learning experience.





Fires

The main elements of learning we include for fire activities are:

- The Fire Triangle
- Where to light a fire (safe locating)
- How to make a fire (safe laying)
- How to light a fire (safe lighting)
- How to put out a fire (safe leaving)

When managing a campfire and using it for cooking or water boiling, we will follow the campfire process (outlined above), including any hygiene considerations. Participants can be involved in all parts of this activity as long as they follow the guidelines they are given by their leader. The start of the process of leaving a fire is a great opportunity for reflective conversations.





Our Site




Site 1 is land belonging to St Peter-in-the-Forest, a beautiful Grade -II. listed Church. and contains gravestones but is largely flat and is a rare plot of land in the forest boundary in which it is legal to light a fire!




Major changes to the building were needed to preserve our 'Unique Forest Church' for another 180 years. To save the marvelous church building, The National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded a large grant to St Peter-in-the-Forest to help renovate and rebuild. This work has also allowed for the creation of a new community facilities that serve the needs of people who live and work in our parish now and in the future. Part of these renovations included the installation of a fire pit, mud kitchen and other Forest School equipment making it the perfect place for Base Camp.

Site 2 is the garden of the Peter House Centre just across from the Church. In the site itself there is a mown lawn and a number of trees in a fenced area. This is a good site for doing a number of woodland activities. This site is also much closer to our indoor facilities.




Site 3 is in the public forest area. It is a small glade with trees and other wildlife, it is easily accessible from the Base Camp and can be used for a number of activities. The owners have asked us to not spend prolonged time under the trees, especially in autumn and winter.





Policies and Procedures

All relevant policies, procedures and documents listed below can be found on our website at www.rbf.org.uk/forestschool

- 
- Public Liability Insurance
 - Behaviour Policy
 - Comments and Complaints Policy
 - Safeguarding (Children) policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Equal opportunities policy
 - Emergency Evacuation Policy
 - Health and Safety Policy
 - Privacy Policy
 - Whistle Blowing Policy
 - Hygiene in the Woods Policy
 - Waste Disposal Policy
 - Communications Policy
 - Risk Management of Tool Use
 - Risk Management of Fire Use
 - Participant Sign-Up Form
 - Safety Sweep Evidence Form




Designated Person Responsibility

The designated person responsible for the safety and care of all children and adults taking part in each Forest School session is the trained Forest School Leader. The Forest School Leader will make this known to all children and supporting adults prior to each session, where other trained adults will be designated roles, such as boundary control, monitoring workstations, carrying the First Aid Kit and equipment, and carrying out any child focused observations.



Pricing

Booking prices are based on the number of participants and the number of sessions. As a guide a standard 2 hour session for 15 children, with 1 RBF member of staff (school to provide additional staff for safeguarding ratios) will cost £179




ADDITIONAL FEES: There are additional fees charged for:
Some special session requests, where additional equipment is needed.
Lunch being provided as part of a session.
Additional staff provided by RBF.

DISCOUNTS

There are the following discounts available to bookings:
Booking a 6-week (or more) block.
Booking a full day session (4hrs or more)
Schools which are in a delivery partnership with RBF

CONSIDERATIONS

Where a school has an outdoor space, it is possible for us to attend their setting and run Forest School sessions, or, where a Level 3 Forest School Educator is employed a school is able to hire our Forest School Equipment



Booking & Enquiries

If you're interested in booking your group or class into sessions at our setting then please email forestschool@rbf.org.uk regarding availability.

You're welcome, and encouraged, to come and visit our site, before making a decision. Our team would love to show you around.

