

Under The Trees Ltd

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## What is Forest School?

The trend for outdoor learning has increased greatly and more and more schools, nurseries and other groups are now on board or are interested in developing Forest School sessions with their classes. However, this trend is not new and the foundations of Forest School have been around since the 1900s, with Scandinavia being the forefront since the 1950s. In the UK, the Forest School trend began to emerge in the early 1990s with a huge growth in the last century.

Forest schools are outdoor, nature-based, learning that focuses on the holistic development of the child. Forest school activities are provided but sessions are led by the group and not the adult. Activities are tailored to the groups' interests and staff observes to see what the group is interested in and sessions are built from there.

Forest School sits separately from outdoor education in that we do not tend to label Forest School as the same as a one-off trip to the woodlands, or a bug hunt or other session that has been organised.

Forest School is a regular, long-term process, rather than a one-off. Typically children (Forest School is open and adaptable to all age ranges) will attend sessions over a minimum of six week period, ideally continuing throughout the year allowing them to experience the woodlands throughout the seasons and allow for longer term benefits. This is where Forest School sessions work well with individuals who maybe experiencing difficulty in the classroom and require an alternative education method that allows them to work in a high staff to pupil ratio and to their strengths. Observation, rather than being direction is important and children learn to take ownership and respect their natural environment through the sessions.

Sessions allow children to appreciate and take risk, make informed decision about to undertake activities and experiences they encounter. The children are learning to be self-sufficient and take care of themselves, boosting their confidence and self-esteem. They will learn through trial and error and dealing with failure to build resilience to keep going.

Forest School links in with The Curriculum of Excellence allowing them to learn about the natural world and the different systems within linking in with Geography,

Science, design and tech as we problem solve and build dens – linking in with numeracy etc..

## **What will we do at Forest School?**

Sessions are child-directed so to answer this question is quite hard as the scope of activities is huge and endless...stopped only by our imaginations.

Staff may facilitate some of the following activities. At Under The Trees Ltd we tend to bring along (especially in the first few sessions) a few ideas to help the group get started as its all new and a huge step for most children. This is not every week as our plan is back-planned and sessions are planned at the end of the previous session.

### **Typical activities include:**

- Sensory walks
- Foraging
- Shelter building
- Mini beast hunts
- Tree climbing
- Campfire cooking
- Woodwork
- Nature art
- Games like Hide and Seek
- Fire building and lighting
- Puddle and mud jumping

During sessions we will work with groups (where possible) to undertake higher risk activities. Please be aware that all groups may not do this and it may not happen at the first session.

We allow the children to experiment with knives and fire. Did your heart just drop at the thought of this? Fear not! Our staff is trained and safety is paramount – we cover all safety aspects and only let children use the tools, fire when we feel they are ready and have an understanding of the use of the tool and the safety.

Behind the scenes we have insurance, risk assessments and trained staff - Jess is a level 3 Forest School Practitioner, since 2012.

Although children are encouraged to assess risk for themselves, this is always with close adult guidance. 'Before an activity, we'll sit in a circle and talk about how the children think they can stay safe,','

Staffing levels are high, too: for some activities, children are even supervised one-to-one.

## **What to bring?**

We recommend you dress you and your class for the weather – lots of layers and warm clothes for the winter

Spare socks, gloves, hats (summer too)

Midge repellent

Sun cream

NB. We cannot administer this

Any medicine

Snack and a drink

In summer months it's nice to wear shorts and t-shirt but beware that you and your class are climbing, moving and walking through the woodland grounds – long trousers and sleeved tops are best.

Camera for capturing all those magical moments

## **What not to bring**

Any toys/items that are precious...please leave them at home or back at school/nursery

Tools – unless we have asked you to specifically bring equipment please leave this behind

We will send you a consent form for your class when booking with photo permission.