**Little Explorers Forest & Farm School**

**Stoke Golding**

**07398 130934**

Dear Parents,

We are delighted to welcome you to Little Explorers Forest and Farm School and feel sure that your child will be happy here.

Children are given the time and space they need to be children. Crucially, they are free to play, explore and imagine. They have direct access to our privately owned, 3 acres of nature which allow children to thrive; learning and playing outdoors throughout the seasons.

Please bear in mind your child will get muddy! We are open all year round, regardless of weather conditions, as we do have a classroom on site in case of need.

Little Explorers Forest School is a magical place where children can develop a wonder of nature and foster an understanding of the environment in which they live.

It is a great privilege and an enormous responsibility working with young children and our staff recognise this and work together to give the children the very best possible experience.

I do hope that our booklet answers the many questions about our Forest School organisation, routine etc. that may have occurred to you. However, if there is anything else you wish to know please do not hesitate to contact us and we will be pleased to help you.

Yours Sincerely

Alison Bates

Senior Manager

**Introduction to Forest Schools.**

**What is Forest Schools?**

The ethos of Forest school is based on a fundamental respect for children and young people and their capacity to investigate test and maintain curiosity in the world around them. It believes in children’s right to play; the right to access the outdoors (and in particular a woodland environment.); the right to access risk and the vibrant reality of the natural world; the right to experience a healthy range of emotions, through all the challenges of social interaction, to build resilience that will enable continued and creative engagement with their peers and their potential.

Forest school is based more on the process of learning than it is on the content – more on the how than the what. This means that genuine forest school practice steps boldly out of the shadow and limitation of planned activities and ventures collaboratively into the realms of the unplanned, unexpected and ultimately unlimited. hildren and young people are given encouragement to direct their own learning- this often requires catalysing on the part of the forest school leader either through stimulating play in the outdoors or through scaffolding a child learning, but mostly through simply observing how children are in the outdoors.

Significantly, and on many levels, a woodland environment is central in supporting this very dynamic approach to learning ;the passage of time from the changing of the seasons, to the contemplation of an ancient tree; the dynamic nature of an outdoor environment-an infinite source of smells, textures, sounds and tastes; a range of visual stimuli from near, to far, high to low, very big to very small; and the infinite layers of historical, cultural, spiritual and mythological significance that speak of our deep relationship with trees and woodland through the ages.

**Environmental Impact**

At Little Explorers we aim to teach children about caring for the environment in a variety of ways from creating habitats to using non-native species for craft activities. There is a woodland management plan in place, with objectives to minimise the impact of activities on the site. We aim to balance the benefits the woodland provides the children with care for the environment.

**Forest School Rules.**

In the first Forest School session, children become involved with the setting and understanding of the Forest school rules to ensure their safety. At the beginning of every session a quick recap of the rules is reinforced by the children.

**Green Guidelines**

* **Walk within the Forest School Area**
* **Keep everything out of your mouth**
* **Stay within the boundary**
* **Kneel near the pond**
* **Do not throw anything**
* **Drag sticks behind you**
* **Care for nature**
* **Ask an adult before you use a tool and follow the tool rules**
* **Have FUN!**
* **Always wash hands following a session.**

**Staff at Forest School.**

**Alison Bates- Senior Manager,**

Forest School OCN Level 3 in Forest School Leadership

First Aid in the outdoors (2day)

Early Years Professional Status

Working towards MA in Education

**Laura Keeber – Manager, Forest School Lead**

EDEXCEL BTEC Level3 National Diploma Early Years

Paediatric First Aid

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Working towards OCN Level 1 Forest Schools

**Lucy Evans- Forest School Deputy**

Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People’s Workforce (Early Learning and Childcare)

Paediatric First Aid

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Working towards OCN Level 1 Forest Schools

**Sadie Sanderson- Forest School Assistant**

Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People’s Workforce (Early Learning and Childcare)

Paediatric First Aid

Safeguarding Trained

Working towards OCN Level 1 Forest Schools

**Paul Bates – Forest School Angling Coach**

Coaching Skills

Paediatric First Aid

Forest Schools is carried out with an adult to child ratio of at least 1:6, but additional adult

support will be provided where appropriate for children who have disability or SEND needs. When using tools, a definitive adult to child ratio is determined. A separate activity risk assessment will carried out for each activity, when any hazards associated with that activity are at risk of causing harm, ratios for each activity will be determined by the type of activity, the competence of the children and the level of risk involved. All staff and helpers supporting the Forest School leader are DBS checked and working towards completing their level 1, forest school training. All Staff are first aid trained and Alison has completed a specific outdoor Forest School first aid qualification.

**Health and Safety.**

At Little Explorers, the health and safety of the children, staff and visitors is our primary

concern. Before a site is used a risk assessment will be carried out by a Forest School Leader. The site risk assessment will be approved by the Manager and updated as and when there are any permanent or seasonal changes to the site.

**First Aid.**

A small First aid kit is accessible to the adults. In addition to this a full emergency bag is on site

and can be found in the classroom. Access to the emergency bag is permitted only to the

Forest School Leader and other teaching assistants not to volunteers, visitors or children.

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| The Emergency Bag contains the following; | Full First Aid kit will contain |
| First Aid Kit (see contents in column right)  • Burns Kit (cling film/scissors/latex gloves)  • Blanket and Roll mat  • Fire blanket  • Torch.  • Small tarp.  • Tissues and paper towels in plastic bag  • Hand wash gel  • Baby wipes  • Fresh water in container  • Spare socks, waterproofs/trousers and hat (size appropriate for group)  • Sugary snack.  • Emergency action plan and incident book.  • Casualty monitoring card.  • Emergency 999 script.  • Sun cream (with opened date recorded on) | * antiseptic wipes * eye irrigation solution * jumbo plasters * medium plasters * small plasters * triangular bandages * large self-adhesive wound dressings * small self-adhesive wound dressings * crepe bandages * pairs of protective gloves * eye pads * roll micro pore tape * CPR face shield * Foil Blanket   The forest school leader will ensure this is adequately stocked and replenished. |

In addition to this a summary of medical information relating to each child and/or specific care

plans are kept in the classroom. Access is available to the children for any medication required (e.g. inhalers, epi-pens). Staff will be advised of any specific medical information they should be aware of. The leader will also ensure a mobile phone and or walkie talkie are available in the area during each session.

**Transport at the beginning of the session**

The minibus departs Britannia Road site at 9.05am each morning to either our Stoke Golding or Hinckley site. Following registration all adults joining the session be made aware of the ratios. The Forest school leader will advise other staff of any changes in expected numbers. The children will change into waterproofs and appropriate footwear upon arrival at Forest school, if not already wearing it. The beginning of the session will follow a similar pattern each time, coming together time to recap rules and boundaries. The minibus then returns the children to the site they were picked up from.

**Cancellation Policy.**

**Weather conditions;**

Following the Forest Schools ethos of......‘there is no such thing as bad weather, only

inappropriate clothing!’ Children are advised to dress warmly and must be provided with

waterproofs. However, there are some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to

go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather;

• In the case of high winds of 25mph or more determined by the met office online.

• In the case of extreme temperature determined by a met office amber weather

warning.

• In the case of extreme cold of below ‘0’ we will ensure children are appropriately dressed, outdoor sessions will be made shorter and time may be spent in the classroom on site and activities will be planned to ensure children are kept moving.

**Staff ratios:**

A session may need to be altered due to staff illness or other circumstances. If this is

going to compromise the adult to child ratios, a staff member from Little Explorers Playgroup may cover at the Forest School.

**Toileting Policy.**

Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before beginning a session, firstly to avoid too many

trips during the session and to avoid having to take off all the waterproofs again!

**Parental Consent and confidentiality.**

At Little Explorers Forest School we aim through our confidentiality policy to ensure that staff, parents and pupils are aware of the Forest schools confidentiality policy and procedures and are aware of their responsibilities in relation to it. Any confidential information regarding children/adults is followed in the same procedure as set out in the Forest school’s confidentiality policy.

In relation to forest schools, medical information for each child is obtained at the beginning of the

year from the parents/carers and is kept in locked storage, in the classroom with restricted access. On the consent form as a cautionary measure parents are reminded to advise us if there are any further medical reasons or phobias that could affect their child’s well being and experience of Forest Schools. The consent forms are kept in individual files in locked storage once medical information has been summarised onto the Forest School Leaders Form.

**Clothing policy.**

Forest School leaders carry a few items of spare clothing in the kit bags and we are building a bank of spare wellies. As a responsible person, the Forest School leader has the right to exclude any child they think is inappropriately dressed for Forest school activities. Children must wear

waterproof dungarees or trousers to protect themselves and clothing from the elements.

Some possible items the children could wear:

**Winter**

Vest or T-shirt

Long sleeved top

Hooded top / fleece or thick jumper

Waterproof jacket and trousers

Thick socks (thermal or two pairs of thin ones)

Trousers

Wellington boots

Hat, gloves and scarf.

**Summer**

Long sleeved T-shirt or top

Light trousers (Arms and legs must be covered in the woodland)

Socks

Trainers, sturdy shoes or Wellington boots. (Sandals, crocs and flip-flops are not suitable.)

Sunhat

Sun cream

**Tool Handling policy**

**Tool usage**

Children will not be using tools until the children are ready in every way; emotionally and physically. Specific tool policies are in place for each tool that may be used within Forest Schools. The policies cover specific ratios for tool usage and any PPE required for adults or children whilst using the tools. All tools are initially modelled by the Forest School Leader to children and adults as set in the ratios determined by the tool policy. All Adults participating must receive basic training on the safe use of tools before being allowed to use them with children.

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| **Fire policy.**  Fires will only be lit by a Forest School Leader following this safety policy when the children are ready in every way; emotionally and physically. | |
| Considerations before deciding to have a fire: | Wind direction.  • No combustible materials nearby/over hanging branches.  • Soil type – ensure not too peaty. |
| Safety: Clothing and hair | • No hair/Jewellery dangling – hair tied back.  • No gloves on when placing materials. |
| Safe sitting: | Seating should be positioned 1.5m away from fire.  • Allow gaps for between seating arrangements for escape routes.  • Invite children into the inner circle.  • Ensure the area between the seating area and fire pit is free from debris and trip hazards.  • Children will be taught they must never the cross the inside ring and taught to move by stepping over the seating log and walking outside the seating area.  • Seating in line of smoke will be avoided. Children will be taught to turn their heads if smoke is coming in their direction. |
| Safe Management | Fires will be lit by the forest school leader and only when the leader is confident the group is able to carry out instructions safely.  • Fires will be lit using a fire steel, matches and firelighters can be used but will be stored safely away in a fire proof box. No flammable liquids will be used to light or accelerate fires.  • Never leave the fire unattended.  • Have a bucket of water available in case of an emergency burn/scald, a fire blanket and a watering can for extinguishing available.  • The fire will be lit in a designated area used only for this purpose. The area will be cleared of dried leaves, wood and we or porous rocks which might explode if heated. A fire bowl/pit will be used to prevent the spread of fire on the Forest school site. |
| Safe Extinguishing: | Spread out the embers of the fire.  • Pour on water gently using a watering can.  • Using the back of the hand, check for heat, and then apply further water if necessary. |
| Emergency | Fire Policy will be followed |

**Food and eating Policy.**

Children at Forest Schools are taught a strict NO eating rule, unless it is a specific activity led by

an adult to prepare and cook food. Initially, when children are ready they will participate in simple

cooking on the fire activities which include; toasting marshmallows/waffles and cooking damper

bread. As skills develop, this may include cooking further meat and vegetable dishes such as

vegetable kebabs, baked apples and hot dogs to name but a few! Wild food is not carried out as an activity to avoid confusion amongst children between what is safe and unsafe to eat. There is

always a staff member present with food hygiene training, when food is being handled and

prepared.

**Clearing away and cleaning up;**

• ALL food that children bring to the school and is not eaten will be taken home

at the end of the session. The area is checked to ensure there no food traces to avoid vermin being attracted to the area.

Children will take all their rubbish home with them.

**Tree Climbing Policy.**

Within the Forest School area there are a limited amount of mature trees which are

suitable for children to climb.

Before allowing children to climb, trees should be checked for loose or rotten branches, as

well as the ground surrounding the tree for hazards/sharp objects and then removed.

• Adult to child ratio 1:1

• Only one child climbing a tree at any one time.

• Tree climbing is NOT allowed in high winds or wet conditions. Children are ONLY allowed to climb up to 1.5 metres in height .

• Adults should note that tree climbing should be carried out with extra caution when children are wearing wellies.

**Safety near water policy**

Our site has open waters where we will aim to teach the children how to fish. This will only be undertaken with our experienced Angler, Paul. When not fishing, children will be taught that although water may look safe, but it can be dangerous. They will learn to spot and keep away from dangers.

Although your child may swim well in a warm indoor pool, that does not mean that they will be able to swim in cold water.

The dangers of our water include:

* it is very cold
* it can be difficult to get out (steep slimy banks)
* there are no lifeguards
* it is difficult to estimate depth

Pond dipping will only take place with supervision. Children will be encouraged to kneel at the edge of the water, as they are less likely to over balance. Pond dipping will take place in organised groups and children will be taught these rules upon entry and reminded each day.

Any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask Laura or Lucy. We cant wait to meet your children!