

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership

Forest School

Information for Parents

Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>What is Forest School?</i> | 3 |
| <i>What happens in Forest School?</i> | 3 |
| <i>Will my child be safe?</i> | 3 |
| <i>How long will sessions last?</i> | 3 |
| <i>What should children wear? / How dirty will they get?</i> | 4 |
| Cold Weather: sensible (ideally waterproof) walking boots or wellington boots, warm socks, hard wearing trousers, long sleeved t-shirt and/or thick jumper, waterproof trousers, waterproof coat, hat and gloves..... | 4 |
| Warm Weather: sensible sturdy close toed shoes, socks, light weight trousers, light weight long sleeved t-shirt, sun hat, sun cream protection. Cover arms and legs to protect from stinging nettles, scratches and ticks..... | 4 |
| <i>How will we know if Forest School is cancelled?</i> | 5 |
| Medway valley Countryside Partnership Forest School Contact Details | 5 |
| Contact Details and Parental Consent Form | 7 |

What is Forest School?

Forest School originated in Scandinavia and was brought to the UK in the early 1990s. Sessions are always **child led** (to foster independence), **long term** (to build confidence, trust and relationships) and **outside** (to gain the many physical and emotional benefits from being in nature). The Forest School ethos aims to promote students' confidence, social skills, sense of self-worth and emotional well-being in an outdoors environment.

Students are not taught, but are encouraged to find things out for themselves through play i.e. games, stories, creative expression and sharing. Through play the child develops their initiative and imagination (problem solving), learns resilience and resourcefulness (perseverance and determination), how to give and ask for help and support from peers (emotional intelligence and teamwork), and how to appropriately self-manage risk in an increasingly risky world.

It is important to recognise that Forest School is not simply an outside classroom or a nature lesson. There is no written academic work and no tests or exams.

What happens in Forest School?

Activities are provided during a forest school session but the emphasis is on the children choosing what they do. Activities might include den building, muddy play, scavenger hunts, woodland arts and crafts, flora and fauna ID as well as storytelling.

The obvious benefits of improved coordination and physical health from doing activities outside, are enhanced by opportunities to develop imagination and initiative. Children are encouraged to try things out and learn from experience, rather than rigidly following a set of instructions. This often involves learning to work as a team to get something done, feeling comfortable with asking for and offering help and learning how to cope with failure or setbacks. All crucial emotional skills to take with them into the adult world.

Will my child be safe?

All Forest school sessions are led by a trained Level 3 leader with an outdoor paediatric First Aid qualification (renewed every 3 years). Assistants will have a minimum of Level 1 Forest School training, or have been inducted by the Forest School Leader.

All activities are risk assessed. As are the site and weather on a daily basis. Dynamic risk assessments continually take place throughout each session.

Fresh water is always available for hand washing. A toilet facility is set up for every session.

How long will sessions last?

Sessions will last 2.5 hours.

What should children wear? / How dirty will they get?

Your children will get dirty!

There is no such thing as bad weather – only inappropriate clothing

As long as the leader deems it safe, children are encouraged to get as messy as they like. Many children and young people miss out on experiential learning because they are overly concerned with getting dirty or spoiling their clothes. You can help them overcome this by making sure that they wear old clothes that they don't have to worry about.

Forest School happens in all weathers (unless extreme and deemed unsafe by the leader) including snow, rain and heat. With this in mind please dress your child in appropriate clothing for the weather and always bring a spare set of clothing and a carrier bag for dirty/wet items.

Cold Weather: sensible (ideally waterproof) walking boots or wellington boots, warm socks, hard wearing trousers, long sleeved t-shirt and/or thick jumper, waterproof trousers, waterproof coat, hat and gloves

Warm Weather: sensible sturdy close toed shoes, socks, light weight trousers, light weight long sleeved t-shirt, sun hat, sun cream protection. Cover arms and legs to protect from stinging nettles, scratches and ticks.



Please Do NOT Wear

- **Shorts**
- **Skirts/Dresses**
- **Sandals/Flip flops**
- **Vest tops**



Winter



Summer

How will we know if Forest School is cancelled?

As Forest school happens in all weathers it is unlikely that it will be cancelled unless there is a staff illness or very severe weather. We will endeavour to let everyone know as early as possible via text message.

Medway valley Countryside Partnership Forest School Contact Details



Medway Valley
COUNTRYSIDE
protect / explore / enjoy

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Contact Details and Parental Consent Form

| | |
|--|--|
| Child's full name | |
| Child's DOB | |
| Parent/carer's full name | |
| Email | |
| Mobile number (to be contacted on via text if session has to be cancelled) | |
| Emergency contact name | |
| Emergency contact relation to child | |
| Emergency contact telephone number | |
| Alternative Emergency contact name | |
| Alternative Emergency contact relation to child | |
| Alternative Emergency contact telephone number | |
| Allergies E.g. hayfever, wasp stings, food allergies | |
| Medical conditions and any medication your child is currently taking | |
| Doctors name and telephone number | |
| Dietary requirements | |
| Special Needs | |
| Any other information you would like us to know | |





I have read the attached Parent Information Leaflet (please tick)

I give permission for photographs to be taken of my child
(for use on promotional material and online)

I give consent for my child to participate in Forest School sessions

I recognise that my child may get dirty and muddy during the session

Signature of

Parent.....date.....