



Hill House Forest School



Parent Handbook

'Arrive with an open mind; leave with a mind full of wonder.'



Hill House Forest School

Ethos

Hill House Forest School aims to provide unique hands on outdoor experiences. Forest School brings learning to life through a range of often challenging but achievable activities which will enable our children to learn through experience at their own level. We will provide a safe and stimulating environment to encourage enriched and independent learning with little adult input. The children will be encouraged to develop their own flow of play while respecting the environment, helping to develop their confidence, independence, self-esteem, awareness and knowledge of the natural surroundings.

Hill House Forest School is about children exploring and experiencing the Natural World through repeated practical involvement over an extended period of time, the natural resources of the woodland and the children's own interest combine to stimulate imaginative, creative and investigative activity. Success and enjoyment raises self-esteem which then impacts of children's lifelong learning and attitude towards themselves, others and the world around them.

'Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better'

- Albert Einstein



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Clothing

At Forest School we always wear long sleeved tops and trousers to stay safe. Waterproof coats (with a hood) and trousers are advised in all weathers and we can provide these if needed.

During the colder months children will need hats, gloves, warm socks, layered clothing and thermal undergarments if you feel needed.

During the Summer we would ask children to bring in suncream and sun hats.

We ask that children wear wellington boots or strong trainers/shoes that will cover the whole foot, preferably with strong tread as the woodland floor can be unsteady.

Children are advised to bring a spare set of clothes with them as play can become very muddy.

Toileting

All children will be taken to the toilet in the School before setting off to the woods, if anyone needs the toilet while there we have three toilets and a disabled toilet approximately a one minute walk away in the School Pavilion.

We will have a designated tree as the 'toilet' in case of emergencies.

Should a child have a toilet accident in the woods, wet wipes, hand sanitiser and spare clothes will always be available. The School pavilion has a shower if needed.

Weather

We will take part in Forest School in all weathers, when it rains we will put up a shelter to ensure we have a covered area.

Forest School will only ever close when conditions are deemed dangerous such as high winds, thunder storms or during periods of extremely cold weather.

The Forest School leader will always check the forecast prior to a session.

Eating and Drinking

Children are taught that when in the woodland to use the motto 'No Pick, No Lick' they should be reminded of this at the start of all sessions and to not put their fingers in mouths or noses while in the wood. If having a drink or snack, wipes, sanitiser and water will be available for hand washing.



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Setting Up for Forest School

Forest School Leader to check the site prior to each session, daily checks will include the following:

- Check for any animal mess or dangerous objects such as glass.
- Any risks due to the weather, falling branches, slippery paths.
- Prepare boundary markers.
- Cut any low hanging/eye-level branches.
- Ensure fire pit seating is in place and has not been moved.
- Ensure mobile phone is fully charged.

Leaving the Site Safe

At the end of each session we will have a 'tidy time' in which all children and adults will take part.

All tools will be counted in and placed in a secure locked tool shed.

All boundary ropes will be collected.

Water canister emptied. Any grey/contaminated water will be disposed of back at School.

Shelters taken down and packed away.

Remove any litter bags from the site.

Fire pit (if used) will be checked numerous times by Forest School Leader before leaving.

Children can help to carry equipment back to school.

Forest School Leader to do head count before leaving the woods.

Forest School Leader to be at the front of the line back to school with another adult at the back.



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Forest School Activities

Den Building

Bug Hunting

Stories/Imaginative play

Team Games

Woodland Craft

Rope/String Work

Sensory Time

Observing Nature

Pond Dipping

Stick Craft

Fire Lighting

Campfire Singing/Stories

Using a Kelly Kettle

Tool Use

Clay Work

These activities will be planned loosely with the intention of the children discovering and extending play through their own interests.

It is worth remembering what suits one child may differ from another, so independent learning and ideas could greatly differ for the group. All children will be encouraged to follow their instinctive play within the boundaries of the woods.



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Aims of Sessions

- To familiarise children with the woodland environment.
- Complement learning in the classroom.
- To help develop own self esteem through achievable tasks.
- To observe children and recognise individuals learning, needs and interests.
- Explore and discover natural objects.
- Understand and respect the natural environment and learn ways we can help sustain it.

Rules of Forest School

- If we hear the whistle blow we STOP whatever we are doing immediately and await adult's instructions.
- We are to stay within the boundaries when in the woods – clear boundaries are set by red rope on the trees.
- Do not eat or pick things from the floor or branches (“no pick no lick” motto).
- Do not damage any living things or natural objects.
- Test branches on trees for weight before climbing.
- Use a stick to test the depth of a puddle before jumping or exploring.
- Look after and respect each other.
- We never try and lift things that are too heavy, if a long or heavy object, we will work together by pulling it with rope.
- Only pick up and carry sticks no longer than your arm, and never wave a stick around.
- We never throw sticks or stones.



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Fire Pit Rules

When sitting at the fire pit we must always follow these rules, even when there is no fire.

- We NEVER enter the fire ring, unless directed by an adult.
- We always walk around the outside of the logs.
- We step over our log from behind to sit down.
- We sit sensibly around the fire pit with our feet still.
- We never throw anything onto a burning fire.
- If smoke gets in our eyes we cover them and count to 10.
- When we are cooking or adding wood to the fire, we wear fire gloves.
- We extinguish the fire safely and leave the area as we found it.
- We ALWAYS check an extinguished fire pit several times before we leave the site.