



# Forest School



A leaflet for Parent/Carers

For children attending Forest School

## The importance of outdoor learning

Daily access to the outdoors when in an Early Years setting is a statutory requirement for all children. But it is not just essential for children in the Early Years it is essential for ALL children and adults. Outdoor learning/play is a critical component of good provision and must be encouraged. It is essential for the healthy development of all young children.

Learning outside offers opportunities to build on and extend, skills taught and acquired inside. It also offers the chance to take on new challenges and risks and to investigate in a different way. The physical freedom of learning outside through climbing, exploring, running, jumping and balancing supports development of the young child's body towards the finer movements that will be required for such skills as writing.

Experiencing the weather, searching for insects, climbing a tree or working on a large scale is learning that can only happen outside.

# **Forest School is an inspirational process that involves:**

- child initiated learning;
- being outdoors;
- integration with the National Curriculum;
- time for children to explore, learn and investigate;
- fun, imagination and creativity;
- using only the natural resources around us Forest School helps to develop:
  - confidence and self esteem;
  - communication and social skills;
  - physical skills;
  - greater understanding and
  - awareness of the natural environment
  - natural motivation and a positive attitude to learning;
  - creativity and imagination;
  - team skills;
  - the ability to recognise and manage risk; and
  - healthier lifestyles.

## What will my child need ?

Children must be protected from extremes of weather many layers of clothing is better than one thick item of clothing. Please follow the kit list below.

**Old clothes are best as your child WILL get dirty. Arms and legs must be covered at all times.**

### Essential

1. Warm base layers( vest or thermals, long sleeved top, jumper, jogging bottoms).
2. Waterproof coat.
3. Waterproof trousers.
4. Wellies
5. Hat and Gloves. Sun hat in summer.

**For health and safety reasons children who do not have the appropriate kit may not be able to take part in our woodland activities on that day.**

## What happens at Forest School

We are very lucky at Holgate Primary and Nursery School to have our own on-site spinney, which we are able to utilise for our Forest School.

The Forest School area is located at the far end of the school grounds, just a 5 minute walk away from the main school building, but far enough for the children to feel like they are leaving their familiar school grounds.

Forest School sessions last up to 2 hours dependent on the weather and temperature during that session.

Forest School sessions always begin with safety, recall of previously taught rules and boundary awareness games. We also focus heavily during our sessions on developing an awareness, appreciation of and respect for the natural environment around us. We ensure that children fully understand the importance of showing care and concern for our world and its inhabitants.

The children will be taking part in a wide range of activities such as, exploring woodland wildlife and plants, creating sculptures with mud, twigs, leaves (i.e. Elf houses, Mud faces, leaf crowns), den building, learning skills such as knot tying and safe use of tools such as peelers, loppers and bow saws to make artefacts such as 'magic wands' and 'tree cookie' name badges, as well as cooking over a fire. These skills are very carefully introduced over time with a high level of adult support and qualified Forest School leader.

The sessions also allow lots of opportunities for the children to reflect upon their experiences, discussing what they have achieved and planning what they would like to do next. Children are encouraged to solve problems for themselves and work with their peers as part of a team. Activities are designed to increase children's self-esteem and self awareness.

## LETS GET MUDDY

Here are just five ways (of many) that mud can benefit your children.

1. Did you know that studies have shown dirt to be good for your brain? Apparently, there are types of bacteria that are naturally found in soil which activate the neurons that produce serotonin – a key chemical in many bodily functions, as well as a natural anti-depressant. **In other words, dirt can actually help make you feel happy.**
2. **Dirt is also great for the immune system, especially in children.** research has shown that early exposure to the naturally occurring microbes in soil will help build stronger, more disease-resistant kids.
3. **In our age of technology children just aren't getting enough time to play outside,** and that has now been linked to attention disorders and obesity.
4. Children who play outside laugh more, which means they're happy!
5. **Kids who play outside grow in their character development:** they become more adventurous, more self-motivated, and they are better able to understand and assess risk.

