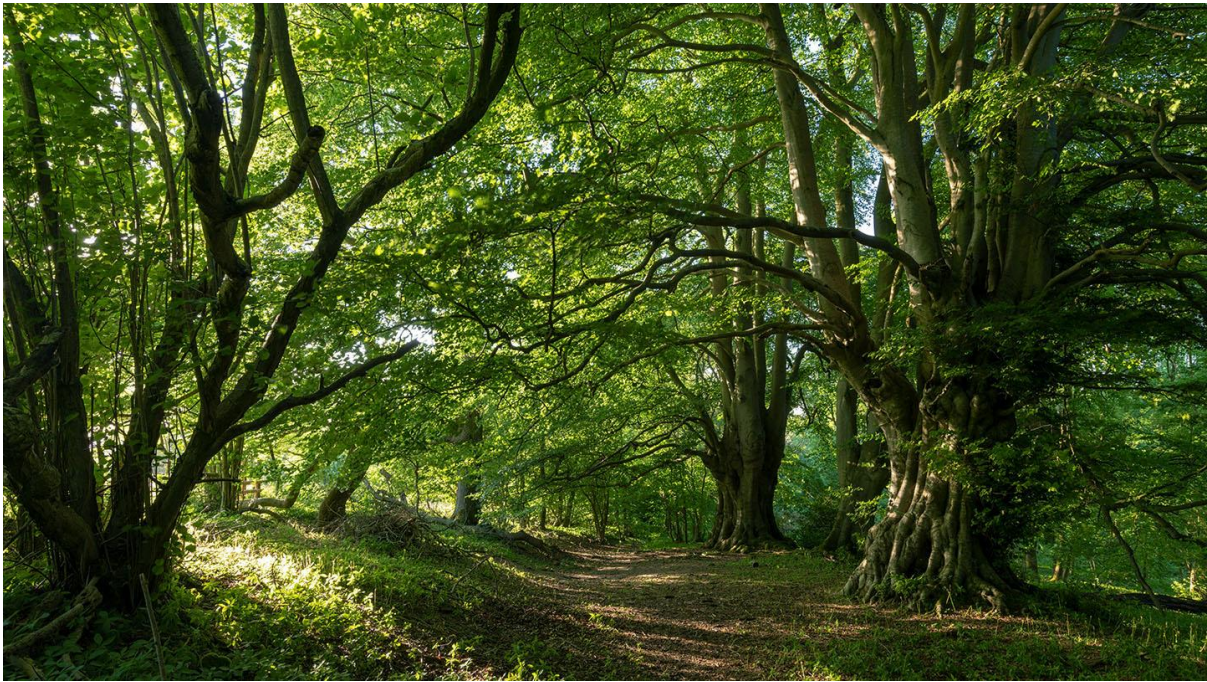




Forest School Handbook



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What is Forest School?

Forest School means many things to many people. The Forest School Association defines it as “an inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.” (Forest School Association 2020).

It is a specialised learning approach that has the learner at the centre, whatever their age. At Cheshire Forest School learners are all seen as equal, unique and valuable.

Forest School promotes child-initiated learning at its best. It creates a world where children can choose and drive their own learning and development at a pace which is appropriate and meaningful to them.

They are freely able to explore and discover whilst learning how to manage appropriate risk and challenge which is vital in their decision-making. The adults are there to support the children, guide if asked, look out for dangers and most importantly celebrate the learning taking place.

It creates a positive atmosphere of support where the children learn to become independent in their physical skills and mental thought processes. They learn to trust their own ideas, believe in their capabilities and recognise their own needs.

They understand that support comes from trusted adults and friends alike as they are nurtured to develop positive relationships with themselves and other people.

Central to all of this is the environment. Children experience the seasons, the wonders of nature, the highs, the lows, the new and the different. This enables them to build a strong, positive relationship with their natural world helping them to make sense of the wider world.

And with the impact of the recent pandemic and what children have had to deal with, Forest School has so much to offer. A natural environment to explore, to enjoy the freedom that it provides with challenges and new experiences. The opportunity to play and work with other children without restrictions. It really is an opportunity for children to find what they enjoy and go with it.

What do Cheshire Forest School deliver?

Cheshire Forest School provides Forest School sessions for:

- Cheshire Little Forest Folk – Stay and Play for walking to 4 years.
- Home Educated Groups
- Additional Needs – sessions tailored to meet individual needs.
- Play Dates – Private Sessions booked for up to 10 children.
- Children’s Parties
- Themed weekend and holiday sessions
- Holiday Club – 4-11 years

What to expect?

All sessions take place in our beautiful one-acre woodland site which is surrounded by agricultural farming land. Access to the site is gained by a short walk through a coniferous woodland.

Each session will include free play and there is a variety of things to do. There are mud kitchens, hammocks, slacklines, balancing beams, trees to climb, music walls, digging area, small world play, and loose parts including lying deadwood, crates and planks to allow creativity in independent play.

Little Forest Folk sessions will be linked to themes such as, Signs of Autumn, Pirates, Dinosaurs, Fairies and Dragons, Down on the Farm, Butterflies, Stick Man, Bear Hunt, Gruffalo, Mini Beasts and to events such as Bonfire Night and Christmas.

Other activities will be included with groups according to age, maturity and confidence levels.

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| Woodland art | Lighting a fire |
| Using tools for craft making | Cooking on a fire |
| Shelter building | Rope and string work |
| Physical challenges | Team games |
| Woodland crafts | Learning knots |
| Tree Climbing | Group games |

Staff and Volunteers

Caroline Rogers is the founder of Cheshire Forest School. Following 20 years teaching in Primary School classrooms, she decided to embark on a new adventure with her passion for the outdoors and the benefits it has for children. She has a Forest School Level 3 qualification, BEd with QTS, First Aid in the Outdoors with Paediatric qualification, Food Hygiene Level 2, Enhanced DBS and Safeguarding Level 1.

Niamh Woodward is our Forest School assistant. She is currently studying to be a Primary school Teacher at Leeds University and has volunteered alongside Caroline for the last 12 months. She is very passionate about the outdoors and enjoys supporting children in their exploration and play. Niamh hold an Enhanced DBS and has completed Level 1 Safeguarding training.

Sophie Grattidge began volunteering with us as part of her Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award in 2022. Sophie loves being outdoors, is a pro at building a campfire and enjoys supporting children in their play. She is now working towards her Silver D of E and is a keen Explorer within the Scouting Organisation.

Insurance

Cheshire Forest School is insured with Birnbeck Insurance.

Code of Conduct– RESPECT, PROTECT, ENJOY

At Forest School we learn to respect the world around us. When we enter the site(s) we will be aware that we share the space with plants, birds and animals and we need to work in a way that will not damage or harm anything.

Our code of conduct is relevant to all participants, adults and children and is framed to create a safe and nurturing learning environment.

Cheshire Forest School Rules

- Look after your Forest School.
- Do not pick anything that is growing.
- Do not put your fingers or anything else in your mouth.
- Stay within the boundaries marked, 'we don't go over it and we don't go under it'.
- Stay outside of the fire circle.
- Look above, below and around for hazards.
- Come back straight away to "base" when the whistle is blown.
- Come to Forest School dressed appropriately for the time of year.
- Speak politely to each other.
- Treat each other with respect.

Welfare Facilities

A toilet and hand washing facility is available in a screened off area. This is a camping toilet and sink. There is also a nappy changing station. Nappies and wipes must be taken away by parents.

A handwashing station is clearly marked beside the campfire circle for general hand washing.

Health and Safety

The safety of all participants is very important to us. All activities have been risk assessed to establish the benefits and to minimise any dangers. Risks can be minimised, but they cannot be eliminated altogether, and health and safety concerns need to be balanced against the potential benefits of any activity. Children of 3 and above will be insured to use tools once fully assessed of capability before use.

Children, young people, and adults will suffer the occasional bumps, cuts and bruises which are a part of everyday life. The application of common sense will ensure that everyone is as safe as they can be, whilst enjoying all the physical and intellectual challenges of Forest School.

Our Risk Benefit Assessment and Activity Specific Risk Benefit Assessments can be found in Appendix 1.

All adults participating in Forest School are required to read the risk assessments and protocols. Our risk assessments are dynamic and reflect regular reviews and are updated as required.

A site risk assessment is carried out before each session to look for natural or foreign hazards in the environment.

Individual risk assessments will be made for children whose medical condition or whose behaviour requires it.

Risk Management

Our risk assessments are dynamic; reviewed in practice and adapted as necessary. A Site Risk Assessment is carried out before every session, and we have our specific risk assessments for activities, tools and general Forest School sessions. All are found at the end of this handbook.

First Aid

A First aid kit is always on site and is clearly marked at base camp with a First Aid sign. Caroline Rogers holds a First Aid in the Outdoors qualification. An accident record book is kept. A contact list for each child and adult attending is held with emergency details and medical information.

| The Emergency Bag contains: | First Aid Kit Contains: |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ First Aid Kit (see contents in column right)✓ Burns Kit including Tea tree oil)✓ Insect Repellent and After bite.✓ Tick Removers.✓ Ice Packs✓ Survival bivvy bag.✓ Blanket and Roll mat.✓ Foil Blankets.✓ 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.✓ Sun cream (with opened date)✓ Emergency action plan and incident book. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Instant ice packs.✓ Alcohol free moist cleansing wipes✓ Adhesive tape.✓ Eye irrigation solution sachets.✓ Plasters.✓ Sterile finger dressing✓ Burn dressed gel✓ Sterile Dressings (Medium and Large)✓ Triangular bandages.✓ Self-adhesive wound dressings.✓ Shears.✓ Performing bandage.✓ Trauma dressing.✓ Crepe bandages.✓ Disposable gloves.✓ Eye pads.✓ Roll micro pore tape.✓ CPR face shield.✓ Foil Blanket. |

Accident and Emergency Procedure

All participants will be briefed in what to do in case of emergency. Under duties set out in the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981, the Pre-School recognises its responsibilities in providing adequate and appropriate equipment, facilities, and personnel to enable suitable first aid to be given. The Forest School Leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised. They will attend to the casualty, giving first aid where necessary. After all such accidents or incidents will be recorded in detail and logged in the Incident Record book or the Accident Record Book. Parents/carers will be asked to sign in the relevant section of the book to acknowledge the incident or accident and any action taken by the Pre-School and its staff. The Pre-school will notify Ofsted and Social Services of any serious accident, illness, injury or death of any child whilst in its care. Notification will be made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the incident occurring. The Forest School leaders and other relevant members of staff should consider whether the accident or incident highlights any actual or potential weaknesses in the policies or procedures, and act accordingly, making suitable adjustments where necessary.

In case of injury If anyone sustains an injury or illness which cannot be treated by first aid on site and requires medical assistance:

In serious cases, 999 should be dialled using a mobile phone carried by the Forest School Leader. The Forest School Leader will be responsible for notifying the parent. The rest of the group will be supervised away from the incident and if in danger, will be moved to safety. One member of the staff will meet the ambulance at the site entrance and direct the crew to the incident site. If the injured child is taken to hospital, one member of staff will go with them, and the child's parent will be updated about the situation by the staff remaining. In minor cases, the Forest School Leader will arrange to contact the parent of the injured child so they can be collected and taken to the hospital, doctor, or home.

Daily Procedures

Before each session a Daily Site assessment will be carried out. An example can be found at the end of this handbook. The weather forecast will also be checked to inform decisions relating to activities, equipment, clothing and if necessary, cancellation.

Tools and equipment will be checked before each session and tools will be kept locked away when not in use.

During each session on going risk assessments will happen by way of observation and changes made if needed.

At the end of each session tools will be counted and locked away equipment returned to storage place. Fire, if used will be completely distinguished.

Forest School clothing

Children and accompanying adults should wear appropriate footwear for the terrain in a woodland and the activities taking place in all seasons.

Spring:

- ✓ Long sleeved tops and trousers should be worn and these should be light weight.
- ✓ Extra layers to be added dependent upon the weather.
- ✓ Hats/caps
- ✓ Waterproofs for wet weather

Summer:

- ✓ Long sleeved tops and trousers should be worn and these should be light weight.
- ✓ Hats/caps.
- ✓ Waterproofs for wet weather.

Autumn:

- ✓ Long sleeved tops and trousers.
- ✓ Extra layers to be added dependent upon the weather.
- ✓ Hat, gloves, and scarf dependent upon the weather.
- ✓ Waterproofs for wet weather.

Winter:

- ✓ As Autumn with the addition of extra layers

