

Micheldever & Stratton



Pre-School

# Forest School Handbook

# **Parents Handbook**

## **Contents**

- What is Forest School and what can it do for young children?
- Aims and objectives
- Examples of activities / experiences
- Using tools
- Using fire
- Suggested clothing
- Transport
- Permissions
- Food and drink
- Cooking
- Policies and Risk-benefit assessments
- Volunteers
- Additional links

## **What is Forest School and what can it do for young children?**

Forest School is a way of facilitating learning outdoors. It is an inspirational process that offers children regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment, using natural resources.

Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

Forest School offers the children the opportunity to take supported risks in an environment which has been made as safe as is reasonably possible. While allowing each child to follow their interests, Forest School introduces new ideas, skills and opportunities to develop practical life skills within a supporting environment. The children have many opportunities to explore and set their own practical challenges, encouraging motivation and perseverance.

Forest School offers physical, social and health benefits for children and provides ways of meeting the learning and development outcomes of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Reflective practice is a feature of each session to help the children understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and be involved in planning for their future learning. Adults stand back and observe, using these observations to scaffold each child's learning and development and provide a flexible learning environment.



## **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of our Forest School is to offer a safe and secure woodland environment which offers children stimulating and inspiring play based experiences.

Our objectives are:

- to provide the children with regular experiences in a woodland environment
- to help the children develop an appreciation for, and understanding of, the natural environment
- to offer the children opportunities to make choices, initiate learning for themselves and take supported risks
- to develop a positive learning environment where individual needs are listened to, met and valued
- to develop positive relationships with the Forestry Commission, Forest Holidays and other settings offering Forest School.

## **Examples of activities / experiences**

Hide and seek; 123 Where are you?; Climbing; Mini beast hunt – looking at habitats; Leaf and bark rubbing; Den building using natural materials; Craft using natural materials – leaves, paint, paintbrushes, stick people, shapes, clay faces, Hapa Zome; Identifying plants – using reference materials; Sorting and counting; Obstacle courses; Using rope and string; Story telling; Role play; Introducing the use of tools for a purpose; Introducing the use of fire for heat and cooking, and the associated safety measures.

## **Using tools**

Introducing and using tools is a normal part of Forest School and will only be considered when the Forest School leader is confident the children are developmentally aware of the boundaries and beginning to understand and assess risks. All tools are introduced through tool talks and their use is supervised by a qualified Forest School practitioner on a low adult: child ratio. Risk-benefit assessments are in place for all the tools which might be used. A detailed policy (6.5 Forest School – use of tools) is also in place and can be viewed through the pre-school's website.

## **Using fire**

Using fire can be a hugely beneficial learning experience for children and adults alike. The Forest School leader will assume overall responsibility for deciding when to light a fire, based on the interests and skills of the children and their age/stage of development. A fire

will not be lit during every Forest School session. Weather and ground conditions will be considered, as well as the safety guidelines set by Forest Holidays and the Forestry Commission. A full Risk-benefit assessment for using fire is in place and a detailed policy (6.4 Forest School – siting of / use of fire) can be viewed through the pre-school's website.



## **Food and Drink**

The pre-school provides a healthy snack of fresh fruit and vegetables for every child at Forest School. Please ensure we have details of any allergies your child may have before they attend. Please send a filled water bottle with your child for them to drink during the session. During colder weather, hot drinking chocolate will be provided. A picnic lunch is provided by you and will be eaten during the session. Please provide any forks or spoons your child might need to eat their lunch. The children will not be able to eat any of their food which falls on the woodland floor, nor will they be allowed to eat any berries or foods which grow in the woods. Snack and lunch times will be supervised by the adults.

## **Cooking**

When a fire is lit there may be the opportunity to cook or heat food such as popcorn or pizza wraps. Parents will be advised of this before the session.

## **Suggested clothing**

As the Forest School site is within the woods, the temperature is noticeably cooler so long sleeves and a jumper are recommended all year round. Long sleeved tops and long trousers are necessary to help prevent ticks becoming attached. Please ensure your child brings a set

of spare clothes to every Forest School session. Each child will be given the responsibility of carrying their own bag and lunch box to and from the site.

**All weathers:** long sleeved top, jumper, long trousers, sturdy shoes (not crocs, flip flops or open-toed sandals)

**Cold weather additions:** extra layers, warm coat, gloves, scarf, warm hat

**Wet weather additions:** waterproof trousers, waterproof coat (or all in one waterproof), wellies

**Hot weather additions:** sun cream, sun hat

### **Policies and Risk-benefit assessments**

All the policies for Forest School are available to view through the Pre-school's website. ([www.micheldeverpreschool.org.uk](http://www.micheldeverpreschool.org.uk))



Forest School introduces children to risk in a managed way and they are taught how to assess risk and consider their own safety and the safety of others. The opportunities for 'risky play' available within Forest School include using fire; tools; ropes and being off the ground (climbing trees). The staff supervise the children while they are involved in these activities, encouraging them to have confidence in their own abilities and celebrating individual successes.

Risk-benefit assessments have been carried out on all aspects of Forest School. If you are interested in looking at these, please talk to the Forest School leader.

**Information relating to ticks can be found through the following link:**

<http://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk>

## Permissions

We need your written permission before your child can attend Forest School. Permission forms can be found on pages 8-10 of this handbook.

## Transport

We meet at the pre-school's registered site (East Stratton Village Hall) for registration and rely on parent's help to get the children to the woods and back for the Forest School sessions.



## Volunteers

You are very welcome to join your child for part, or all, of a Forest School session. Please talk to the Forest School leader if you are interested.

I hope this handbook explains what Forest School at Micheldever and Stratton pre-school looks like. We look forward to welcoming your child to these sessions and seeing them develop emotionally, spiritually and academically. For further information, please talk to Julie Woolrich-Moon or visit our website [www.micheldeverpreschool.org.uk](http://www.micheldeverpreschool.org.uk).

Further information relating to learning outdoors can be found at:

[www.forestschoollassociation.org](http://www.forestschoollassociation.org)

[www.woodlandtrust.org.uk](http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk)

[www.forestry.gov.uk/visit](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/visit)

[www.national.trust.org.uk](http://www.national.trust.org.uk)





## Forest School Permission

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

**This is additional to the permissions you agreed when your child first joined Micheldever and Stratton pre-school. Please ask if you need to review these.**

- I agree to my child taking part in Forest School activities and experiences in Blackwood Forest at regular intervals. All Forest School sessions will be led by a qualified Forest School practitioner, who is also a member of the pre-school staff team.
- I understand that the legal ratios for adult:child will be maintained at all times.
- I understand that during Forest School my child may have opportunities to be involved in: using tools, building a fire, cooking on the fire
- I agree to my child being photographed during Forest School for the pre-school's use.
- I agree that a member of staff, who holds a current paediatric first aid certificate, may administer first aid to my child.
- I agree to supply my child with appropriate outdoor clothing and footwear for Forest School. (Open-toe sandals, crocs and flip flops are not appropriate footwear)
- I understand that some weather conditions will make Forest School unsafe for the children and adults. The weather factors that will prohibit Forest School are:-
  - High winds (Beaufort scale 6; 25-31mph winds) (<http://www.rmets.org/weather-and-climate/observing/beaufort-scale>)
  - Lightening
  - Temperatures below -5°C (cold weather conditions will be assessed by the Forest School leader before each session)
  - Inaccessible road access caused by the weather conditions
- I understand that the pre-school leader will give me as much notice as possible to inform me of any weather that she feels unsafe for the children. I understand that should Forest School be cancelled in advance of the session, for whatever reason, my child will be able to attend a regular session in East Stratton Village Hall.
- I understand that in the event of Forest School being cancelled during a session for emergency reasons, I will be contacted to arrange for my child to be collected immediately.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/ Carer

Name of Parent/Carer (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Forest School permission - Travelling to and from Blackwood Forest

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

- Everyone meets at the pre-school's registered site (East Stratton Village Hall). A lift rota to transport all pre-school children to and from Blackwood Forest is arranged by the pre-school leader.
- All children will travel in suitable car seats, in accordance with the law.  
<https://www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules>
- Any pre-school child, other than the driver's own, **must** travel in the back of the vehicle. If you are driving your own child, it is your responsibility to ensure they are safe during the journey. Pre-school staff do not accept responsibility for these arrangements.
- All children will travel in their own car seat, unless otherwise agreed by their parent. Pre-school staff do not accept responsibility for these arrangements.
- ☐ I agree to my child travelling to and from Blackwood Forest in a vehicle driven by another pre-school parent.
- ☐ I agree that it is my responsibility to fit my child's car seat into the back seat of another parent's vehicle for the purposes of the journey.
- ☐ I can take \_\_\_\_\_ pre-school children (in addition to my own children) in my vehicle.
- ☐ Vehicle registration \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ My vehicle is insured through \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ My insurance policy number is \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ My policy expiry date is \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ My contact telephone number is \_\_\_\_\_
- To the best of my knowledge, the insurance and vehicle details provided above are up to date and correct. I shall inform the pre-school leader of any changes to my insurance and/or vehicle details as soon as possible.
- All pre-school staff have a duty of care and the responsibility to raise any concerns regarding travel arrangements directly with drivers and parents.
- All drivers and parents have a duty of care and responsibility to raise any concerns regarding travel arrangements with other drivers, parents and pre-school staff.
- An outing will not go ahead if concerns are raised about its viability at any point. The pre-school leader is responsible for making a final decision.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/ Carer  
Name of Parent/Carer (print) \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Forest School permission - Medical Information

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

- I confirm that any medical information I have supplied to the pre-school previously, including information relating to known allergies, is up to date.

As an additional precaution, we are required to ask you in more detail about allergies and insect stings.

Please tick the appropriate box(es):

- ☐ My child has never been stung by a wasp/bee
- ☐ My child has been stung by a wasp/bee and made a normal recovery
- ☐ My child has been stung by a wasp/bee and had an allergic reaction

If you ticked the final box, please give talk to the Forest School leader.

- My child has the following known food allergies / allergies / intolerances: \_\_\_\_\_

- 
- ☐ I agree that a member of staff, who holds a current paediatric first aid certificate, may administer first aid to my child.
  - ☐ I agree to apply a suitable insect repellent to my child during the at risk months for ticks. Pre-school has Avon Skin So Soft Original with Jojoba available but you may use your own brand.
  - ☐ I agree to a member of pre-school staff using a recommended tick removing implement to remove a tick if one is noticed on my child. I understand I will be advised of this at the end of the session.
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Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/ Carer

Name of Parent/Carer (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Contact phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_