



Gorsefield Forest School

Information Booklet



Gorsefield Rural Studies Centre
Grove Hill, Stansted, Essex. CM24 8SS. Tel/Fax 01279 813320
www.gorsefield.org



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Overview of Forest Schools

Prior to any programme, your Forest School practitioner will meet and liaise with teachers to discuss any particular educational or developmental areas that you would like to cover in the outdoor environment. Depending on the age and composition of your group, activities could include:

Nature detectives, bug hunts, woodland art, den making, tool use, fire lighting, tracking skills, story- telling, orienteering, sensory exploration and much, much more!

In all aspects of our provision, children are encouraged to respect the natural environment.

The learning that takes place at Forest School is based within play and exploration and is built upon week-on-week. Participants are encouraged to take ownership of the woodland space and in the first sessions, time will be spent familiarising themselves with the area, the leaders and the routine of the Forest School sessions.

Due to the nature of the Forest School ethos, we remain flexible in the make-up of the day, if a child shows a particular interest, or is drawn to something, we will follow their agenda and encourage them to build on their discoveries.

Forest School sessions are designed to be structured but not directive. Throughout their time at Forest School the children will be involved in woodland art and other projects that can be taken back to school or home. We find this encourages them to talk about and remember their days and gets the whole family, or school involved, in their Forest School experiences.

Forest School is, by its nature child-led, so children will participate in some guided activities but also experience the wonders of free play in the challenging woodland environment.

Participants will also be taught to make informed choices, use their own initiative to solve problems, co-operate with others and learn to evaluate risks.

“Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children and young people opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self esteem, through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland environment.” *Forest School (England) Network*.

What is a Forest School?

Forest School in the UK has been adapted from a Scandinavian approach to learning where it is normal to have access to outdoor environments at all times of year and in all weathers.

The philosophy of a Forest School is to encourage and inspire individuals of all ages through positive experiences and participation in motivational and achievable tasks. Taking part in activities in a woodland helps children and young people to develop a connection and respect for the natural world; promoting both physical and mental health.

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Programmes differ in execution with varying groups, leaders and learning objectives; but will always involve visits to the Gorsefield Forest School site where participants take part in activities and games, making use of the natural environment.

Within the programme, all of the SEAL objectives are focused on. (S—social, E-emotional, A-active, L-learning)

Research has found that the benefits for young people of all backgrounds in attending a Forest School are:

- Increased self-confidence and self-belief
- Development of social skills and awareness of the effect of their actions on others
- Increased language and communication skills
- A keenness to participate — motivation and concentration
- Improved stamina and gross and fine motor skills
- Development of respect for, and interest in, the natural environment

The Forest School approach focuses on the process of learning rather than the outcomes. Time allows for repetition, the development of confidence, as well as the consolidation and transfer of skills.

The Practitioners Role

The Forest School Practitioner will plan and run sessions, taking into consideration all the health and safety issues that could arise and informing teachers, volunteers or parents clearly of their role.

The role of the Forest School leader is to boost and develop children's self-esteem, self-belief and confidence by suggesting small, manageable tasks and ensuring that they have time and freedom to learn at their own pace without pressure.

They will model appropriate behaviour at all times and encourage children to develop a greater awareness of their own and others emotional needs.

In addition, the Forest School practitioner will be responsible for liaising with all interested parties, completing health and safety and risk assessments, following policies and procedures, administering any first aid and maintaining the first aid kit, counting equipment in and out and maintaining tools.

Forest School practitioner will always take into consideration the specific needs of a particular group or individual. The leader will ensure that every child is respected as an individual, that bullying is not tolerated and that the rules and guidelines are followed. In the event of an emergency they will direct the group to safety.

Gorsefield Forest School
Example week 2 session plan

Key Questions/ Activities	Equipment required	Key learning points
How can we be safe in our Forest School	None	Assessing risks
What choices can we make	None	Assessing risks
What should we not touch or pick	None	Assessing risks
Game 123 where are you	None	Learning boundaries
Animal game	None	Following instructions
Break	Apple ,banana, juice	
Bug hunt	Magnifying glasses, dishes, trowels, brushes	Learning about habitats and taking responsibility
Nest building	None	Imagination, oracy
Lunch	None	
123 where are you	None	Reinforcing boundaries
Find a tree	Blindfolds	Trust and oracy
Look up through a mirror and describe it to a partner.	Mirrors	Oracy
Friendship bracelet	Wool	Fine motor skills
Reflection time draw with charcoal on the paper what you liked the best today.	Paper and charcoal	Reflecting on days learning

Six Session Gorsefield Forest School Outline Plan.

Session One

Aim:

- To introduce myself, the children introduce themselves
- Explain what a forest school involves
- Explain where the sessions will be taught
- Encourage interaction between pupils and staff
- Introduction to basic safety rules

Learning Objectives:

- Familiarisation with staff and verbal, visual prompts.
- Encourage fun outside and inside
- Show an awareness of each other and space
- Recognise changes that happen to their bodies when they are active.
- Promote communication with others
- Compose a rhythmic chant using sticks

SEAL objectives:

- Communication through exploring wellness bag
- Emotional through making a rhythmic chant with sticks
- Active by hide and seek and obeying 123 where are you.
- Learning about risks and being safe through looking at the wellness bag and games.

Session Two

Aim:

- Practice Safety games.
- Talk about what to not to touch e.g. Stinging nettles, fungi.
- Children and staff to be made aware of boundaries.
- Establish base camp.
- Leafy circle time and snack.
- Look for animal habitats.
- Games.
- Friendship bracelets.
- Leafy circle time and lunch at base camp
- To be aware of recycling

Learning objectives:

- Rehearse verbal and visual prompts.
- Familiarise with the learning environment.
- Use fine motor skills.
- Taking turns showing self control.
- Use their creative imaginations.
- Understand recycling

SEAL objectives:

- Social / work as a team and share when making bracelets
- Emotional through participating in different games and looking for animal habitats
- Active by playing games
- Learn new skills and learn about the environment they are in.

Session Three

Aim:

- Reinforce prior learning e.g. 123 where are you
- Build shelters
- Use charcoal to do a bark rubbing or Whittling
- Use senses to identify a tree.

Learning objectives:

- Rehearse verbal and visual prompts.
- Familiarise with the learning environment.
- Use fine motor skills.
- Taking turns showing self control.
- Use their creative imaginations.
- Problem solving and making decisions.

SEAL objectives:

- Social / work as team when leading partner to a tree
- Emotional through participating in different games and making a shelter
- Active by playing games
- Learn new skills and learn about the environment they are in.

Session Four

Aim:

- Reinforce prior learning e.g. 123 where are you
- Use charcoal to draw a picture of what they have done today
- Use senses to identify a tree.
- Understand what is required for a fire.
- Use fire sticks

Learning objectives:

- Rehearse verbal and visual prompts.
- Familiarise with the learning environment.
- Use fine motor skills.
- Taking turns showing self control.
- Use their creative imaginations.
- Problem solving and making decisions.

SEAL objectives:

- Social / work as team when leading partner to a tree
- Emotional through participating in different games
- Active by playing games

Learn new skills and learn about the environment they are in.

Session Five

Aim:

Reinforce prior learning e.g. 123 where are you
Make an elder bracelet or and a tree necklace.
Participate in games.
Evaluate the sessions

Learning objectives:

Rehearse verbal and visual prompts.
Familiarise with the learning environment.
Use fine motor skills.
Taking turns showing self control.
Use their creative imaginations.
Problem solving and making decisions.

SEAL objectives:

Social / work as team when leading partner to a tree
Emotional through participating in different games
Active by playing games
Learn new skills and learn about the environment they are in.

Session Six

Aim:

To build a campfire and make a damper

Learning objectives:

Children/ Adults to be aware of the risks involved with making a fire
To be able to make a fire and work as a team
To make a damper and cook it
Raise children's /adults awareness of how one can survive in a different environment

SEAL objectives:

Social / work as a team and share experiences.
Emotional talk about how the participants feel about fire and past experiences
Active participation
Learn new skills.

Fire Procedure

In the event of a fire, the following procedure must be followed:

- In case of fire burning too high, flames can be extinguished using the bucket of water located by the fire.
- If the fire starts to burn fiercely do NOT attempt to put it out.
- Teacher and Forest School staff to check everyone has been evacuated.
- Gather in the designated area well away from any flames.
- Teacher if on site otherwise Forest School leader to do a role call.
- Gorsefield Forest school staff will call 999 with details of location,(found on risk assessment)
- Give your name and a brief description of the incident.
- State that the emergency crew will be met by a Forest School staff member waiting at the entrance to the centre.

The First Aid bag is in the orange/safety rucksack and is placed in a visible area. All adults are aware of its position.

April 2011
Review 2012

Policy for Volunteers

Volunteers will be appointed in a similar way to paid colleagues. This will include a police check and taking of references. The Forest School leader will discuss with the person volunteering what they would like to do and what hour/days they are wanting to volunteer for.

The Forest School leader will check that before volunteer works with the children that police checks and references are completed, following Children's Schools and families guidelines.

Volunteers will not be left in a position of responsibility and will not be included in staff to child ratios.

Job description

The volunteer is managed by the Forest School leader or deputy in their absence. They are to assist in providing a safe, caring and professional environment of the children whilst they attend Forest School.

Main responsibilities:

1. To provide and maintain close supervision of the children attending Forest School at all times.
2. To help to provide a safe and stimulating environment within the established guidelines of the Forest School.
3. To strictly adhere to the agreed Forest School discipline procedures, promoting positive behaviour.
4. To work within the team to plan daily activities to encourage the children's all round development and enjoyment.
5. To help promote a teamwork environment in conjunction with other staff and students.
6. To maintain confidentiality at all times.
7. To ensure that your line manager is aware of any incidents affecting the welfare of the children attending Forest School
8. To help maintain equipment, ensuring all faults are reported through the appropriate channels. To assist in the setting up and putting away of any equipment at the start and end of each session.
9. To attend training programmes and meetings with other staff and parents as deemed necessary.
10. To be committed to developing and maintaining a multi-cultural, anti racist, non-sexist environment, respecting the children's individual differences.
11. To establish and maintain close liaison with the parents and school staff of each child attending Forest School

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For more information on availability, prices and session planning please contact Paul Irving at Gorsefield on 01279 813320 or drop him an email p.irving@gorsefield.org.uk



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