



Giles Nursery and Infants' School Forest School

Parent & Carer Information

Introduction

We are pleased to announce that we will be starting our Forest School for Year One children from the week commencing 14th November. We will be using our beautiful woodland area to enhance our topic-led curriculum through a programme of outdoor learning activities.

The sessions are as follows:

- **Big Cat Class: Monday afternoon**
- **Walker Bear Class: Thursday afternoon**
- **Red Fox Class: Friday afternoon**

What is a Forest School?

Forest school is about nature-based learning, where children have the opportunity to explore and learn through practical activities in a natural environment. It brings learning to life, allowing the children to make choices, take risks and develop their self-esteem and confidence in the outdoor environment. In addition, the Forest School learning environment provides opportunities for children to:

- Form positive relationships with others
- Develop self-esteem and self-confidence
- Learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults
- Develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others
- Develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety

Forest schooling takes place all year round in all weather, except thunderstorms and high winds, using the natural environment and resources to promote problem solving and creative thinking skills.

Staffing

The Forest School sessions will be planned by Mrs Edwards and each class will visit with their class teacher and be supported by a teaching assistant, all of whom are qualified first aiders.

What to bring

On your class Forest School day, your child will need to come into school wearing suitable clothes, instead of their school uniform. As the children will be outside in all weathers, they are likely to get muddy or wet. Please provide suitable clothing that you do not mind getting muddy.

Kit List (please label everything with your child's name)

Every session:

- Wellies **or** walking boots **or** sturdy footwear and a waterproof coat with a hood.
- Old clothes to wear in the woodland – this must be a long sleeved top and trousers so that legs and arms are covered, even when it is warm and dry, as this helps to prevent stings, scratches and bites.
- Water bottle.

In cold weather:

- Scarf
- Gloves
- Warm Hat

In hot weather:

- Sun hat.
- Sunscreen (applied before school).
- Wellies are preferred but walking boots may be worn if your child is able to put them on and off independently.

Forest School Sessions

The children will enjoy a range of structured activities involving cross-curricular opportunities that will enhance their learning experience, as well as closely supervised unstructured play.

Examples of the types of structured activities the children will do are:

- Shelter building
- Natural weaving
- Natural art
- Story telling
- Tree recognition
- Animal tracks
- Bug hunting
- Pond dipping
- Games to build skills and self esteem

The children will begin by becoming familiar with the woodland area, and understanding how the boundaries keep them safe.

Environmental considerations and Conservation

Forest School promotes environmental awareness and encourages sustainability. The children will be taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them.

Where possible, and if appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our Forest School site.

After the sessions

Outdoor learning sessions can be very active and therefore very tiring for the children, especially during the first few sessions. The children may get muddy and wet and may incur minor scratches or bumps as a result of their learning or play. This is a natural part of outdoor learning and helps the children to become more resilient and to develop their risk-taking skills.

Risk Assessments and Safety Information

Daily risk assessments will be carried out before each session. At the beginning of each session, children will be reminded of the rules to keep them safe. This will allow the children to become independent in their learning and to learn to take safe risks.

As previously stated, Forest School takes place in all weathers except in extreme conditions, when it is deemed unsafe to go into the woods. We will always monitor the weather and alternative activities will be planned in the event we have to cancel the session.

Insurance for all the Forest School activities is included within the school's insurance policy.

Tool use

Using small hand tools are important parts of Forest School and enable children to develop new, practical skills that help them build their self-confidence.

As the year progresses, the children develop their understanding of safety, and the Forest School becomes well established, the children will have opportunities to experiment with small hand tools.

These activities are highly supervised by qualified staff and many steps will be in place before the children move on to these activities.

Over time, the children will have to demonstrate their understanding of safety in order for them to move on to this stage.

Children are encouraged to assess risk themselves at the beginning of an activity, discussing how they can keep themselves safe, before an adult-led safety talk takes place. Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of each session and children will be reminded and guided throughout the activities.

Eventually, the children will learn to use various tools such as bow saws and vegetable peelers and will have 1:1 adult supervision during these activities. An inventory of tools will be maintained and all tools will be checked at the end of each session to ensure they remain safe to use.

In case of emergency

If there is an injury to adults or children:

- Staff will administer First Aid.
- Other staff will ensure the safety of the remainder of the group.
- Emergency services will be alerted if necessary.
- Accident forms will be used.
- Parents will be informed. **It is therefore ESSENTIAL that we always have up-to-date contact details for all parents/carers and all emergency contacts.**

We hope your child will enjoy Forest Schooling and outdoor learning as much as we do. Please do let us know if you have any questions.

Kind Regards

Mrs Edwards and the Year One Team