

## Guidance for Forest School adults –

Forest School sessions are run using high adult to child ratios; therefore we rely heavily on volunteer helpers and appreciate any time given to help. To ensure you are able to fully support the children and allow them to gain the very best experience from Forest School sessions, a number of guidelines should be followed;

- Join in with activities and model good practice. If you are seen to be doing something the children are more likely to try something too.
- Extend children's learning where appropriate by asking open and extending questions, using key vocabulary and sentence stems.
- Use positive language to children whenever possible.
- Support children to manage their own risk but remind children of agreements (rules) and boundaries.
- Join in with child initiated activities join in, but allow children to take the lead.
- Encourage children to share, communicate and work together, talking through how children may feel in different situations and allowing them time to resolve problems where possible. This will strengthen their social and emotional development.
- Encourage children to appreciate growing flora and not to pick flowers and plants they see. Dead wood can however be used for den building and other activities.
- Forest School allows time for children to talk freely and to open up. If anything said by a child worries you or if you see something that you feel is inappropriate behaviour, please follow our school safeguarding procedures.
- Read and adhere to school policies and risk assessments including the Forest School and Safeguarding policies and all Forest School risk assessments.
- Ensure that our Hartford Heroes are promoted throughout Forest School sessions.

### **What to say instead of 'be careful'...**

#### Foster awareness:

- **Notice how**... these rocks are slippery, the log is rotten, that branch is strong.
- **Do you see**... the poison ivy, your friends nearby?
- **Try moving**... your feet slowly, carefully, quickly, strongly.
- **Try using your**... hands, feet, arms, legs.
- **Can you hear**... the rushing water, the singing birds, the wind?
- **Do you feel**... stable on that rock, the heat from the fire?
- **Are you feeling**... scared, excited, tired, safe?
- **Who will**... be with you, go with you, help you if?

#### Problem solve:

- **What's your plan**... if you climb that boulder, cross that log?
- **What can you use**... to get across, for your adventure?
- **Where will you**... put that rock, climb that tree, dig that hole?
- **How will you**.... get down, go up, get across?
- **Who will**... be with you, go with you, help you if?

# Hartford Infant School

## Forest School Guide for Staff and Helpers 2021-2022



### About Forest School

Forest School first began in Scandinavia in the 1950's as a means of helping children to learn about the natural world through stories, songs and practical experiences in an outdoor classroom. Its value in building confidence, self-esteem and independence was quickly recognised and Forest School soon spread. In 1995 Bridgewater College in Somerset visited Denmark and brought back the Forest School idea and ethos to England. Forest School encourages children to take a chance, to explore risk and to take the time to stop and reflect on their experiences, asking questions and making sense of their own thoughts and feelings in the natural world. Children gain a valuable lesson in healthy, active lifestyles through a child led approach, developing holistically; physically, socially, emotionally, spiritually and intellectually in a safe, stimulating, positive and natural environment.

Forest School Lead: Miss Sophie Legg

## Forest School Sessions

- Forest School provides a child centred approach to learning and an opportunity for children to develop their love and understanding of the natural world.
- At Hartford Infant School our school site is used for weekly sessions across year groups, for 90+ minutes.
- Sessions run all year round and in all weathers (except in extreme circumstances) and include focused, planned activities that children are encouraged to participate in with the support of an adult, as well as child initiated activities using natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation.
- The children are permitted to explore the whole Forest School site independently and use their usual year group toilets.
- Sessions begin and end with a whole group focus in the circle of logs and children are encouraged to question, reflect and communicate their ideas and feelings during this time. Children and adults must adhere to the rules concerning the log circle and as a habit never walk across the log circle but step over the log and sit down, walking around the outside of the circle to access other areas.
- Activities may include den and shelter building, whittling using potato peelers, fires, exploring flora and fauna, natural collections, sawing wood to make badges, creating mud characters and pictures using natural paints as well as songs, stories and team games!



## Health and Safety

Forest School encourages children to explore risk in a controlled and safe environment. A risk assessment will be carried out before each session to assess hazards and the likelihood of such hazards causing harm, and weigh this up against the knowledge and enjoyment that could be gained from taking appropriate risks. All adults must ensure they are familiar with our site risk assessment.

In addition, activity risk assessments and assessments for the use of tools are in place and regularly reviewed by the Forest School lead. Children need to learn life skills of assessing and managing their own risks and to learn from their success or mistakes with this, therefore clear boundaries and agreements (rules) are established with the children.

Our school First Aiders oversee all First Aid Treatment provided. All first aid incidents must be recorded and communicated with parents in line with the school policy. A first aid kit is kept in the green Forest School bag with the Accident Report Book. Two radios are taken outside to ensure communication with the whole school in addition to the school mobile phone. In the event of any emergency, school procedures will be followed.

COVID-19: all resources must be thoroughly cleaned outside at the end of every session and returned to the Forest School shed and cupboard when dry. All adults and children must ensure thorough hand washing when returning to the school building. All Forest School volunteers to meet classes outside by the Forest School shed and wear a visor/face covering.

## Clothing

To ensure children (and adults!) gain the best experience from Forest School sessions, appropriate clothing must be worn to school on their Forest School day. This includes;

- Welly boots
- Warm clothing – layers are particularly good
- Hats – for both sunny and cold weather
- Long sleeved tops and trousers
- Waterproof clothing for wet days
- Clothing that can get muddy!