**Balcombe C of E Primary**

**Forest School**

**Information and Consent Forms**

**for Parents and Carers.**

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# **Introduction**

Balcombe C of E Primary School is introducing Forest School sessions for Years 2 and 6 from September 2015. Each Year will be divided into two groups which will do Forest School on alternative weeks so that children take part in sessions once every fortnight throughout the year.

This Information Pack contains:

* some background about Forest School
* some of the activities children will take part in
* practical details, e.g. clothing needs
* consent and medical forms.

**Please complete and return the forms to the school office before your child is due to begin Forest School as they will not be able to take part without them.**

If you have any further questions not covered by the Information Pack please ask at the school office.

# **Forest School History and the Forest School Experience**

## Origins

Forest School has roots in the Outdoor Life culture of Scandinavia and British traditions such as Scouting. It draws on the theories of educationalists such as Montessori and other advocates of child-led, holistic learning, By the 1950s outdoor learning was well established in Scandinavia, arriving in Britain in the 1990s.

## What is Forest School?

Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children, young people and adults regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland environment. At Balcombe School the site is the woodland adjacent to the school field, in Casteye Wood.

It offers opportunities for learning across the curriculum, providing inspirational and challenging outdoor activities to develop essential skills and qualities such as resilience, team-work, risk management, independence and self-motivation. Physical fitness and well-being are promoted, along with an appreciation and understanding of the natural world and a sense of place and belonging.

## Six Key Features of Forest School

* It is run by **qualified practitioners**.
* It is a **long term process** with regular contact with a local wooded environment (preferably over the seasons).
* It is **child-centred learning,** where children have opportunities to learn about and manage risk.
* It has a **high adult/child ratio.**
* **Observations** of the learners enable **scaffolding of learning.**
* It encourages **care for the natural world**.

## Some Activities at Forest School

The sessions are mainly ‘learner led’, with activities following the children’s areas of interest, so there is no set curriculum or programme; instead, the week’s planning reflects directions taken in the previous session. Balancing that, new skills, games and activities will be introduced at each session so that a broad range of experiences will be built up over time. Some of the activities include:

* Games and opportunities for free play.
* Exploring the natural environment and its plant and animal life.
* Den making
* Crafts and creative/artistic activities.
* Using tools safely, e.g. whittling and drilling.
* Scavenger hunts, foraging and exploration.
* Rope swings and adventure games.
* Fire lighting and outdoor cooking.

## Staff at Forest School

Forest School Leader (FSL) Jenny Worrall

Assistant Forest School Leader Anna Hawthorne

Adult Helper tbd

# **Essential Information**

## Clothing and kit for Forest School

**Forest School sessions continue in all weathers** except very windy conditions (wind speed over 25 mph), so appropriate clothing is essential. **Children may get very muddy and wet, so please send only those clothes which will not be ruined by these conditions!**

## Footwear

Sturdy, waterproof shoes or boots, e.g. hiking boots are best all year round. Wellies may be worn, but offer less protection from heat and cold and less freedom of movement.

## Summer

* Long-sleeved tops and trousers give essential protection from sun and insects.
* Waterproof coat and trousers.
* Warm fleece/jumper.
* Sun cream and insect repellent.
* Water bottle.
* Any essential medication, e.g. inhalers..

## Winter

* Waterproof coat and trousers.
* Layers of warm clothing, e.g.
  + t shirt/vest, long-sleeved top, hoodie/warm jumper, fleece.
  + Long trousers/tights/leggings/’skins’, extra socks.
  + Hat, scarf, gloves etc.
* Water bottle.
* Any essential medication, e.g. inhalers.

On the day of the Forest School session your child should arrive at school in uniform, with Forest School clothing in a named bag. Children may go home in their Forest School clothes unless they are very muddy or wet in which case they will change into dry clothes.

## Toileting

Balcombe Scout Group kindly allow children at Forest School to use the facilities at the Scout Hut.

## After-school clubs.

If your child attends an after-school club on the day of Forest School please be aware that some children, particularly younger ones, may be cold, wet or tired. If staff consider that a child would be better off going straight home rather than attending a club the office will telephone you to arrange for collection at the end of school.

# **Health and Safety**

Forest School includes activities which may be considered higher risk than usual. This may be a concern to parents at first, but there are many benefits to gained from such activities as they offer opportunities for participants to:

* learn how to manage risks for themselves;
* learn how to do so in a safely managed and supervised environment;
* benefit from associated health and development gains;
* build character, resilience and self-confidence.[[1]](#footnote-1)

A framework of policies and procedures is in place in order to ensure that sessions are as safe as possible and any risks are properly managed.

* The site, tools and activities are all risk assessed before each session (copies may be seen by parents on request.)
* Activities and conditions are continuously monitored for safety.
* A high adult to child ratio is maintained.
* Sessions are run by trained staff.
* Staff have up to date DBS checks and an Outdoor First Aider is always present.

## Ticks

Participants should wear long-sleeved tops and long trousers to protect against insects such as ticks; insect repellent may give additional protection and may be sent to school for children to apply prior to Forest School, as with sunscreen. We advise you to check for ticks after FS sessions as a matter of routine and to seek medical advice if one is found, particularly if a red rash is present. The consent form includes an option to give your permission for a trained first aider to remove it, using specialist tweezers or ‘tick card’ if a tick is found during Forest School. If you prefer, a plaster will be placed over the tick for removal and treatment at home. Additional government advice and information may be found [here](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/411747/20150305_PHE_factsheet__TICKBITEdocx.pdf) and a printed copy is available in the parent info sheet in the school office.

# **Dates for Forest School**

The dates when your child will be at Forest School will be sent to you every half term. Sessions run from after afternoon registration to 3 pm. **Children will need to bring Forest School clothing and any essential medication on the day.**

# **Adult Helpers**

If you are interested in volunteering as an adult helper at Forest School please ask the school office for more details.

# **Consent Form for Forest School**

Please complete this form, continuing overleaf if necessary. Please write clearly. **Please note, children cannot take part in sessions without a fully completed consent form.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Full Name of Child: | |  | |
| Child’s Date of Birth: | |  | School Class: |
| Address:  Postcode: | | | |
| Phone Number: |  | | Email: |

* I agree to my child taking part in Parent & Child Group Forest School Activities. Sessions will be led by a trained Forest School Leader:
* I understand that my child will, at an appropriate level, have opportunities to work with hand tools and small fires through the course of their Forest School work and may have the chance to cook and eat at Forest School.
* I understand that my child may need additional outdoor clothing for Forest School activities as detailed in the Forest School kit list. Children who do not have appropriate clothing will not be able to take part in sessions – this is for their own safety and wellbeing.
* I consent for my child to receive emergency first aid should the need arise, and for my child to receive emergency treatment from healthcare professionals.

**Please circle to give your consent to the following:**

* Trained staff may administer antihistamine to bites/stings. **YES / NO**
* Trained staff may remove ticks. **YES / NO**

(If you do not consent to tick removal first aiders will cover the tick with a plaster for removal at home. Please see Parent Information for more details, or ask to speak to the FSL.)

**Signed**………………………………………………… **Date** ………………………..

# **Medical Information**

Please give details of any medical condition, which might affect outdoor forest school sessions.

|  |
| --- |
| *Continue overleaf if necessary* |

As an additional precaution, please tell us in more detail about allergies and insect stings. *Please tick which statements apply*:

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, we will get in touch with you for further information.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| My child has the following food allergy/allergies: | | |
| Name of GP/Doctor/Surgery |  | |
| Emergency Contact Information (Parent / Carer and an alternative emergency contact)  Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Tel number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Tel number: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | | |
| Signed: (Parent/Carer) | | |
| Name of Parent / Carer: | | Date: |

1. From Tim Gill, *Growing up in a risk averse society, 2007.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)