



Howard Primary School

Dear Year 1 Parents and Carers

After Easter, pupils in Year 1 will start a fortnightly Forest School session. These sessions will run on Friday mornings.

Children will need to come to school dressed in long trousers or leggings and a long-sleeved top. Please see the next page for more information regarding appropriate clothing for Forest School. They will also need to bring a pair of wellington boots in a named carrier bag to be left in school, to be used for the sessions.

Forest School will take place in all weather conditions (as long as it is safe to do so e.g not in a thunder storm, in strong wind or torrential rain) so a water proof jacket or coat will also be needed in case of rain. Waterproof trousers can also be worn.

What is forest school?

“Forest School is an inspirational process that offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a natural environment with trees.”

Forest School Association

Children will have regular session in the nature area within the school grounds. Sessions will be run by myself, Mrs Simion, assisted by members of staff from the class attending sessions. I have completed my Forest School training and am currently in the processes of completing the coursework that goes towards my final qualification.

At Forest School:

- Children will have **regular** opportunities to develop a **positive** relationship with the natural world.
- A **love** of the great outdoors is instilled by providing inspirational, stimulating, hands on experiences that will develop **self-esteem, confidence** and **responsibility**.
- Learning is brought to life by using the natural world and real tools.
- Individual learning styles are identified to enable the participants to learn most effectively and in a **holistic** manner.
- Planning for all participants in the early session stages, then letting the participants lead the sessions through their **own interests** once it is appropriate to do so.
- Informed, self-calculated **risk taking** and **choice making** is encouraged and supported to ensure the participant's **safety**.
- A sense of **sympathy** and **empathy** to the group is developed.



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More details about the Forest School Association can be found here:

<https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school/>

<https://www.forestschoollassociation.org/full-principles-and-criteria-for-good-practice/>

Sessions are planned around the children's needs and built upon each week. I am being qualified through nationally recognised and accredited training, (via the Surrey Wildlife Trust) therefore ensuring Forest School is a high-quality learning experience. The earlier sessions will concentrate on safety; establishing boundaries and routines and allowing time for the children to become comfortable and confident in the outdoor space. As the children develop in confidence and familiarity with the environment the sessions focus on developing and reinforcing skills, promoting nature connection and developing relationships within the group.

What happens at Forest School?

Forest School follows a set routine each week. The session will start with a whole group talk about keeping ourselves and each other safe. We will then have planned group activities to engage them with the surroundings. As the children become used to the sessions and gain confidence, they will be encouraged to follow their own interests. Activities will be suggested but children will be allowed to explore and follow their own interests, within the rules of the session.

We will do craft activities and go on hunts, using the children's' imagination to look for "treasure" among the leaves and trees.

We will also learn about the wildlife and the environment and develop a respect for it. We will also think about ways of improving the nature area so that we can encourage more wildlife to the site. This may be through planting more trees or creating bird houses.

Once children are ready, we will introduce the use of tools, under very close supervision. Children will be taught how to use, carry and store the tools safely.

We will also have a fire circle from the outset and once children are able to follow the rules of the fire circle, we will light a fire. Again, this will only be done under close adult supervision and following very strict safety rules. We will not light a fire until all children are aware of and can follow the rules. This ensures the safety of all children and adults.

We may also have a shared snack during forest school sessions. All staff are aware of all children's dietary needs.

What does my child need for Forest School?

Children will need to come to school dressed in their forest school clothes.

Long trousers or leggings

Long sleeved top

Jumper

Waterproof coat/jacket

WELLINGTON BOOTS to be brought in a named carrier bag



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Please see below for a full list of recommended clothing. If you don't have any of these items, please speak to a member of staff as soon as possible.

Forest School Clothing guide

“There is no such thing as bad weather, just unsuitable clothing!”

We value and recognise the effort it takes to ensure your child comes prepared, so that they can get the most out of Forest School sessions. This means **making sure they are appropriately dressed**. It can be hard to predict just how many layers a child will need but it is always colder in the shaded woods. Please see below for our recommendations. Your other crucial role is to embrace the mud! Please do not send your child in their best clothes as they will almost certainly get dirty during the session!

Layers!

- THE best way to keep warm.
- Add one more than you think they will need.
(We can always remove a layer but once cold, it can be hard to warm up)

Waterproof trousers

- Essential!
- Standard 'thin' pair in summer for protection
- Ski trousers ideal in winter OR extra layer under trousers
- All-in-ones not advised for potty/toilet users

Trousers

- Full length for protection
- Extra pair of leggings/tights/thermals under normal trousers in cold weather

Warm socks

- Wellies get very cold!
- Extra pair of wool/ fleece/ fluffy socks inside wellies
(Normal socks in wellies are not warm enough for cooler weather)

Waterproof coat

- Preferably with a hood
- Thick and warm in winter (or use an extra fleece layer)

Warm hat

- Preferably covering ears.



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Mittens/Gloves

- Thermal and waterproof
(Knitted gloves get damp and do not keep little hands warm enough during the colder months. Don't worry about mittens limiting finger movement as the cold is much more limiting!)

Tops

- ALWAYS long sleeves (to minimize risk from stinging nettles and biting insects etc)
- At least 3 layers under coat in winter
(eg. top, jumper, fleece and coat, or 'base layer', top, warm jumper and coat)

Waterproof boots

- Wellies are essential!
(Alternatives include snow boots and walking boots)

Please Note! In summer, wellies, waterproof trousers and light long sleeves are still essential, to protect from thorns, nettles, ticks, insect bites etc. Please also send a sunhat in hot weather and apply sun cream before school on sunny days.

Forest School will take place on Friday mornings. Each class will have a session every two weeks.

We are really excited about Forest School starting and know that your children will learn from and enjoy the sessions very much. If you would like further information, please speak to your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Simion



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