**‘Lisa’s Forest Friends’**

**@ Little Lambs Kindergarten**

**Forest School Handbook**

**February 2018**

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**Forest School Ethos**

The Forest School ethos has six principles and criteria for good practice

• **Principle 1:** Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular

sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit.

Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of

Forest School.

• **Principle 2**: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

• **Principle 3:** Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all

those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative

learners

• **Principle 4**: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported

risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

• **Principle 5:** Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners

who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

• **Principle 6**: Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to

create a community for development and learning

Forest School is a unique educational experience and process that offers children the opportunity to succeed and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland environment. Children engage in motivating and achievable tasks and activities throughout the year and in almost all weathers. Children will work with tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, grow in confidence, self-esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding of the natural world. The Forest School concept originates in Denmark, originally aimed at pre-school children, where it was found that children who had attended forest school then arrived at school with strong social and communication skills, having the ability to work in groups effectively, generally had high self-esteem and a confidence in their own abilities. These foundations helped them to raise

Procedures and Code of Conduct

“Take only memories, leave only footprints”

Forest school sessions will take place within the ‘Secret Garden’ at Little Lambs Kindergarten. The session will always start with a group introduction and risk assessment overview.

Children are expected to behave as they would during usual sessions and follow our setting rules.

Below are some general guidelines the children should follow during our Forest School time:

Entering the Secret Garden -We will enter the area respectfully and will explore, investigate, learn and play in a manner that will not damage our Forest school environment.

We understand that we share our Secret Garden with plants and animals and that when we are in our Secret Garden we are sharing the environment with them.

Boundaries- The children are clearly reminded of the boundaries each week that are clearly marked each side by ribbons in the den and the fence. If a child is lost sight of shout ‘1,2,3, where are you?’ The children have been taught to respond ‘1,2,3, I’m here’ through classroom games that are practised regularly.

Lighting a fire- When lighting a fire Lisa will take control of the operation and all accompanying adults will be briefed before we start. A lit fire will not be left unattended at any point. A fire may not be lit until it has been confirmed to all that our fire safety equipment is in place. Open fires will be built within a fire square.

At the Fire Circle - An open fire will be lit within a fire circle. A fire circle using log stools are established around the perimeter, 1.5m from the fire square, with two obvious escape routes. No one may enter the fire circle perimeter unless invited to do so by an adult. There may be no running past the fire circle. No items must be carried and placed within the fire circle unless by an adult. If you wish to move around the fire to a new stool you must step out of the circle and walk around the outside of the log circle. Even when the fire is unlit we will treat it as if it is lit.

Using Tools - All tools have their own clear code of conduct for correct use which will include consideration of specific personal protective equipment, correct use of a specific body posture, and consideration of the appropriate types of activity that each tool may be used for.

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Picking up and playing with sticks - Children can carry sticks shorter than their arm’s length but are encouraged to think about how close they are to other children.

Longer sticks may be dragged or carried with the help of another person when each person is at either end. Sticks must not be thrown. Sticks must not be pulled from living tress.

Picking up and playing with stones - Stones may be picked up and transported.

Children often like to make patterns and pictures with them. Stones may not be thrown. They may be dropped but thought must be given to whether it is safe to do so, i.e. what is beneath where I am dropping it?

Digging - Digging large holes is not encouraged. Children may carefully move soil to look for insects and their habitats using lolly pop sticks, trowels, fingers or small sticks found within the forest but deep holes should not be made to avoid trips or falls which may lead to broken bones. Any digging areas are marked off with orange cones.

Collecting wood - Wood is collected for fire lighting purposes or shelter building. It is collected in four thicknesses – matchstick sized, pencil sized, thumb sized and wrist sized. This is a good mathematical activity involving sorting and matching.

Sticks may be collected for creating pictures and patterns but should be collected sparingly so as not to disrupt creature habitats.

Eating and Drinking – Nothing should be eaten that’s found in the Secret Garden, unless this activity has been specifically planned for during the session or the food has gone through the leader (e.g. blackberry picking). Children must be reminded not to put their fingers or hands in their mouths or noses. When having drinks and snacks children will use wipes & water to clean their hands before consumption.

Rope and String Use - We encourage the collection and transportation of materials. We do not allow children to tie up each other. If a child has a good idea and wants to tie up something, for example a tarp or a swing, an adult should help them as needed, modelling appropriate knot tying and modelling how to talk through ideas and decisions.

Carrying and Transporting Materials - Children are encouraged to roll, lift, and drag and to pull materials, either by using their hands or by using ropes. We encourage safe lifting by bending our knees and keeping our back straight. Safe lifting should always be modelled by adults. Heavier objects should be rolled, lifted or carried by more people working together.

Toileting - Children are invited to use the toilets before we leave the nursery however we are fortunate enough to be on site so this is not a problem.

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Tree climbing within the den - An adult must be present when wanting to climb trees in the Secret Garden. The ground cover should be checked for ‘sharp objects’ and the trees are marked with red ribbons as suitable for climbing. A visual check must be made for loose and rotten branches. Children are permitted to explore to their own limits or to a maximum height of 1.5m. Adults should be near enough to catch if a child should fall but far enough away to not be invasive to the children’s exploration.

Leaving the Site - We work according to the ethos ‘leave no trace’ that we were in the forest as much as is reasonably possible. Our Secret Garden is for our sole use so we may leave constructions etc. However of we venture to the forest area where we explore the larger trees; Shelters should be taken down imported materials need to be removed. Very occasionally larger items may be left between sessions. All rubbish and toileting items will always be removed. If artefacts have been found or made these may be taken off the site with the consent of Lisa.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Staff**

**Forest School Leader: Lisa Bryant**

The responsibilities of the Forest School Leader are as follows:

• Promote and provide Forest School experiences which adhere to and apply

the 6 principles of the Forest School ethos.

• Adhere to their own values, policies and procedure as outlined in their Forest

School handbook.

• Have an awareness of school/setting/organisation policies and possibly

negotiate some issues with management if there are discrepancies between

these and their own Forest School handbook

• Undertake risk–benefit analyses and implement risk management systems.

• Ensure appropriate welfare requirements are in place for the

group (clothing/shelter, hand washing, drink & food, toilets).

• Communicate with all stakeholders, including landowners, other staff,

parents, management, participants, local community etc.

• Ensure appropriate ratios are maintained at their Forest School and provide

clear guidance and induction processes for helpers supporting their Forest

School programme, to ensure a consistent approach.

• Share planning and evaluations of sessions recorded with relevant staff.

• Record observations of individual learners learning processes and share with

other relevant staff.

• Reflect on their own practice; undertake continued professional development

and network with other local Forest School practitioners.

• Undertake a baseline ecological survey of the Forest School site, establish

environmental impact monitoring systems and create a simple management

plan for the site for the duration of the programme.

• Implement the management and maintenance of the Forest School area. This

may be negotiated with the landowner.

• Ensure that equipment, tools and outdoor clothing are fit for purpose.

Activities

Activities for Forest Schools are diverse and numerous but it should be reminded that we are trying to create independent learners who are inspired to try out their own ideas, explore their own interests and to attempt new ideas.

Some activities might include:

* Shelter building
* Mud kitchen
* Potion making
* Den exploration
* Tree climbing
* Fire lighting
* Tool use
* Studying wildlife
* Playing team and group games
* Sensory activities
* Tracking games
* Cooking on an open fire
* Rope and string work
* Art and sculpture work
* Woodland and traditional craft
* Developing stories and drama, and meeting imaginary characters
* Physical movement activities

Clothing/Equipment List

Children will ideally require the following clothing for Forest School:

Winter:

• Vest or T-shirt

• Long sleeved top

• Hooded top / fleece or thick jumper

• Waterproof jacket

• Thick socks (thermal or two pairs of thin ones)

• Trousers

• Waterproof trousers

• Wellington boots

• Hat, gloves and scarf

Summer:

• Long sleeved T-shirt or top

• Light trousers

• Socks

• Trainers, shoes or Wellington boots.

• Sunhat

• Sunglasses (if appropriate)

• Participants are also responsible for providing their own insect repellent

Or sunscreen

Leader Equipment

Each leader will always have the following during every session:

* First Aid Kit
* Camera
* Medical details of participants/Medication for individuals
* Phone
* Fresh Water
* Risk Assessments
* Accident Forms
* Emergency Procedures
* *As appropriate:-*
* Emergency Rucksack
* Spare Clothing
* Set of tools/fire steel etc.
* Adequate supply of appropriate Personal Protective Clothing
* Bin bag
* Fire blanket
* Bucket of water
* Tick remover
* Emergency shelter

Harmful Species

*IMPORTANT: PLEASE INFORM THE FOREST SCHOOL LEADER*

*IMMEDIATELY IF YOU NOTICE ANYBODY CONSUMING FRUIT OR*

*OTHER VEGETATION FROM THE SECRET GARDEN*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Harmful/Poisonous**  **Features** | **Symptoms and Prognosis** |
| Holly  Image result for holly | Berries | Poisonous: Causes vomiting  and diarrhoea |
| Privet  Image result for privet | Berries | Potentially Fatal: Nausea,  vomiting diarrhoea,  drowsiness. Can be fatal. |
| Laurel, Rhododendrons &  Azaleas  Image result for Laurel, Rhododendrons and Azaleas | All parts | Fatal: Causes nausea,  vomiting, difficulty breathing,  coma, then death. |
| Lords & Lodies/Cockoo Pint  Lords Ladies or Cuckoo Pint Arum maculatum Poisonous berries Spadix Leaf Surrey England Stock Photo | All parts | Fatal: Burning and swelling  of the lips, mouth, tongue, and  throat if eaten, - skin irritation  and stomach pains, dizziness,  cramps, vomiting & heart  failure after eating the berries.  Fatal if enough is eaten or  medical aid is not sought |

Risk Management of Tools

Tools are all counted in and out and are kept in suitable containers in one

designated spot. Children must never be allowed to help themselves. Tools are

given out for a purpose and all adults should model their correct use, storage

and transportation at all times. Tools are used well away from other active

children and only walking is permitted when carrying them.

Fixed blade knife – to be kept by FS leader and used for cutting string,

whittling etc. Children will be using knives and if an adult uses one good practice will be modelled. When using a fixed blade knife, the motion should always be away from the body with the strongest hand gripping the knife securely. Any whittling should take place from a stable sitting position with elbows on the knees encouraging safe technique. Students should also sit away from others in a safe position creating an imaginary circle around them known as a ‘blood bubble’

Secateurs – for cutting and pruning. Ensure fingers are clear from blade. When carrying ensure blades are locked closed and pointing towards the floor.

Loppers – for cutting and pruning sticks up to 5cm diameter. Ensure hands are clear from blades and only cut wood below head height. When carrying hold under fixed arm horizontal to ground, ensure blade points toward the floor. Safe storage is to lean the loppers against a tree trunk blade down and within sight of an adult who has responsibility for them

Bow saws/Laplander saws – for cross-cutting wood up to 12cm diameter.

Children will be taught how to use a saw with close supervision, or with a buddy

helping in ‘push, pull’ fashion. Adults will always supervise closely. Keep hands

away from blade and the safest method of use is to brace the wood through the

bow saw itself with the other hand. Ensure blade covered when not in use and

carried pointing downwards, blade facing backwards, never leave on the floor.

When not in use (shed storage) blades should be loosened off by an adult. The

Laplander saw folds out and is similar in safety and job role to the bow saw. It’s

much easier to use independently and must be fold back itself when not in use.

Palm Drills/Bit and Brace – for making holes. The item to be drilled should be placed and held securely on a firm flat surface. Work in a safe space being aware of others moving around you, think ‘blood bubble’.

Storage/maintenance-all tools should be cleaned after each session and kept in a locked toolbox kept out of the reach of children.

Tool Talk:

Bow Saw

This is a bow saw

This is the handle

This is the blade

This is the blade cover

I take the cover off like this

This is the cutting edge

When I have finished sawing I put the blade cover back on like this.

I hold the bow saw like this

I walk with the bow saw like this

I pass the bow saw like this

When I am not using the bow saw I put it down with the blade facing in and the

handle facing out like this.

I use the bow saw to cut anything bigger than a 2 pence piece.

When I use the bow saw I use it two arms and a tool away from anyone like this.

When I have finished using the bow saw I put it in the designated place.

No gloves on tool - glove on non-sawing hand.

Loppers

This is a pair of loppers

This is the handle

This is the blade

This is the cutting edge

I hold the loppers like this

I walk with the loppers like this

I pass the loppers like this

When I am not using the loppers, I put them on the ground with the handles

facing forwards and the blade facing behind me.

I use the loppers to cut anything smaller than a 2 pence piece.

I use the loppers 2 arms and a tool away from anyone else.

When I have finished using the loppers I put them back in the designated place

Sheath Knife

This is a sheath knife

This is the handle

This is the sheath

I open by pressing here

This is the blade

This is the cutting edge

I always use on the outside of my body with the blade facing away from me.

When not using it I put it back in the sheath like this.

I hold it like this

I carry it like this

I pass it like this

When using the sheath knife for cutting string/whittling I always cut away from

myself or onto a hard surface.

I always use it 2 arms and a tool away from anyone else.

When I have finished using it I put it away in the designated place.

No gloves on tool - glove on non-knife hand

Adverse Weather Conditions

The aim is to implement outdoor sessions throughout the seasons and sometimes

unpredictable weather conditions that accompany them! However, there are some occasions where it may not be safe or practical to go ahead with a planned session due to extreme weather. We will not go to Forest School if the conditions are deemed dangerous such as in high winds, during thunder storms, or during periods of extreme cold or wet. Lisa will ultimately make the decision deeming if the weather is suitable for Forest School. When it is wet a shelter will be used or the group will go inside as many of the activities can be carried out inside, if this is not the case an alternative activity will take place so no child will miss out if conditions do not allow us to go out into the Forest.

Risk Assessment Guidelines and Forms

A site risk assessment is carried out every week and a daily check made before

each session in the Secret Garden. In addition, an activity risk

assessment will be in place for any activity that may require it, such as stick

whittling, wood cutting, shelter-building, and fire-lighting. Additional risk assessments will be carried out for children whose behaviour or medical condition demands them.

The risk assessment process is as follows:

• Look for the hazards

• Decide who might be harmed and how this might happen.

• Evaluate the risks and decide whether the existing precautions are adequate

or whether more should be done.

• Record our findings

• Review our assessments and revise them if necessary.

• Inform all adults accompanying the group and require them to sign to show

they have read and understood the concerns.

The Forest School risk assessment process is ongoing and is subject to annual review.

Risk Assessments will be held in hard copy.

Further Information

Use of Photographs

Parents/carers at Little Lambs Kindergarten have given their consent for

photographs to be taken of their children and used for specific purposes. These are found in each child’s individual file. There are only very few children who are not to be photographed and therefore staff need to be confident with ensuring consent lists are up to date.

Ratios

Ratios of students to staff with be in line with Ofsted guidelines and Forest

School good practice guide. They are as follows:

2-3 YEAR OLDS 1:4

3-5 YEAR OLDS 1:8

5 YEARS PLUS 1:8

I operate with a maximum of 12 children and a minimum of 3 staff (including myself).

Paths of Communication & Sharing Information

Forest School Session will take during Little Lambs operating hours, term time and during school holidays. If families would like to get in contact with us to discuss Forest School please see the contact details below.

Address: Little Lambs Kindergarten

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Hove

East Sussex

BN3 7FG

Phone: 01273 933631/07740784128

Website:

Forest School Leader: Lisa Bryant

Email: lisasforestfriends@gmail.com