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**Welcome to GetOut Outdoor Learning Forest School**

GetOut is a community interest company which was set up in 2024 by a group of enthusiastic Forest School leaders. They had all experienced the benefits of Forest School through working with children in their local community woodlands and wanted to provide these benefits to as many groups as possible all year round. We aim to inspire children, and adults, to GetOut in all weathers, help them feel confident and relaxed being outside and teach skills and nature connection to promote environmental responsibility.

The Forest School ethos has six principles which were agreed by the Forest School Community in 2011. These are:

**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.**

Forest School groups will be offered blocks of at least 4 weeks to immerse themselves in the woodland and experience the changes that occur there over time. Lessons will be planned with a structure and be loosely based around themes, but participants will be free to follow their own curiosities and develop learning in areas that spark an interest.

**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.**

Our Forest School aims to give the local community the chance to learn more about their local woodlands and outdoor spaces, so that they can become comfortable and confident here. This will include gaining practical knowledge such as what grows and lives in this habitat, and knowledge of tools and outdoor skills. When combined these will allow groups to have the ability to care for these spaces themselves and ensure they are enjoyed by future generations for years to come.

**3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.**

Our Forest School puts the learner at the heart of every session. No curriculum is followed, but learners are given the chance to explore and be curious about the world around them and their role in it. Groups will be given space and time for free play and to complete tasks such as nature connection, meditation, crafts, and tool use. Tasks will be appropriate, and achievable, to each age group with the aim to build their confidence, resilience and independence. At all times there will be plenty of choice so that groups can involve themselves in activities that develop their own interests. They will be encouraged to explore their thoughts, feelings, and relationships (with themselves, nature and their peers) whilst doing this. Group leaders, and assistants, will always be on hand to assist and guide but will aim to help groups follow their own path rather than direct and instruct.

**4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.**

Groups will be given the chance to assess their surroundings, including any potential hazards, use appropriate tools and have a camp fire. All participants will be able to build on their independence by learning to assess risk for themselves. They will gain confidence in their own ability to respect potential dangers, either of their environment or instruments such as tools and fire, in the knowledge that they can harness them safely and sensibly. A qualified group leader or assistant will always be present when tools or fire are being used to ensure appropriate behaviour.

**5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.**

GetOut Outdoor Learning CIC is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, assisted by local volunteers who will be fully briefed before each session to ensure the safety of all participants. Leaders, and assistants, will be encouraged to follow their own curiosities and interests to develop their abilities in leading and helping with sessions.

**6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.**

At our Forest School we encourage participants to remember “Take care of yourself, take care of others and take care of the woods”. We aim to provide a safe space for these groups to learn more about themselves in order to benefit their own health and happiness; to work with their peers and help each other achieve their goals together, promoting inclusion and companionship; and to develop their understanding of the natural world around them, the importance of being outside in nature and how they can feel a sense of ownership to care for their natural environment.

**Behaviour**

We aim to promote good relationships so that all members of our Forest School can work together and enjoy their time spent learning in the forest. Our Forest School aims to promote each individual’s confidence and independence, but there are also risks to be made aware of in this environment. Therefore it is essential that all groups are informed of what behaviour is expected of them. Our rules are;

**Take care of yourself -** Learners are expected to listen respectfully to Forest School leaders and supporting adults, and follow any instructions given relating to how to stay safe in the forest and when using equipment.

**Take care of others -** Learners are expected to listen respectfully to their peers and act appropriately to encourage each other to have fun together and keep each other safe.

**Take care of the woods -** Learners are expected to treat their surroundings with respect and not cause any damage to the plants or animals they encounter.

Learners will be encouraged to see themselves as part of a team, appreciating each other and following rules together, as well as focusing on their independent behaviour and growth. If unacceptable behaviour does occur, we will have a restorative framework to resolve difficulties constructively. If needed, safe space will be provided for learners to calm down and be ready to talk. The framework for discussion with all those involved could include:

What happened? How were you feeling?

How do you feel now?

Who else has been affected? What do you need/need to do now?

If necessary we will note down the incident to allow parents/carers to be informed.

**Clothing**

We ask all participants to come to Forest School appropriately dressed so that they feel comfortable to learn. We ask, where possible, that **waterproof trousers and coats be brought to sessions whatever the weather** as waterproof trousers will allow participants to kneel and sit more comfortably on rough, potentially damp, ground in all seasons. Even in summer the weather can change so coats can be worn or taken off as needed. Whatever the weather, shoes need to be comfortable and sturdy enough for playing on uneven ground and to protect feet from sticks and hidden obstacles. We have a supply of waterproof trousers to borrow so please ask if needed.

In cold weather this includes many layers as if the participant becomes too warm layers can be removed and put back on as needed. Layers should include;

* Long comfortable trousers
* Long sleeved t shirt/vest
* Long sleeved jumper
* Warm coat
* Hat and gloves
* Thick socks
* Sturdy shoes or boots

In hot weather participants should still wear long sleeves and trousers to protect from sunburn, stings, scratches, and insect bites. Warm weather clothing should include;

* Long comfortable trousers
* Long sleeved t shirt
* Sun hat
* Sun cream to be applied before attending
* Socks
* Sturdy shoes – never open toes

**Extreme Weather**

Forest School will take place in all weathers and it is important that participants are dressed accordingly. Extreme weather conditions that may cause Forest School to be cancelled could include

* High winds (consistently over 35mph) where there is an increased risk of danger due to falling trees.
* Heavy snow forecast to continue during a session with freezing conditions (below 0) that increases risk of slips and hypothermia.
* Heavy rains forecast to continue during a session making it difficult to have any activities not under shelter, or which increase the risk of flooding and slips.

**Health & Safety**

**Accident & Emergency**

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974we aim to ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of all participants at our Forest School. At Forest School we mitigate against risk to create a safe learning environment by identifying hazards and taking the steps to reduce harm to participants. We do this in a number of ways including;

* The Forest School Leader undertakes a risk assessment prior to each session and shares this with learners and adults. .
* Encouraging learners to identify risks themselves and think about what is safe for themselves and others supporting them in their learning to be more responsible.
* Ensuring the correct, safe storage and maintenance of all equipment.

Forest School Leaders hold a first aid certificate. In the event of an accident, your child will receive first aid and if deemed necessary parents will be contacted.

As Forest School may involve use of tools, sessions will not go ahead with less than 2 adults present (a Forest School leader plus assistant). This will ensure that these activities are suitably supervised.

**Medical and Dietary Requirements**

Prior to sessions the Forest School leader should be made aware of any medical conditions and dietary requirements of learners and volunteers. This will be shared with assistants where appropriate.

**Hygiene**

Soap and water will be provided for all participants to use prior to eating and after using the toilet. Participants will be taught not to eat anything found in the woodlands and to avoid putting their hands in mouths during sessions.

**Ticks**

Woodlands have many deer, and other animals, living in them which are known to carry ticks. These are tiny, spider-like animals which attach themselves to animals and people. They can carry Lyme disease, which left untreated can cause serious illness. Not all ticks carry disease and if they do the quicker a tick is removed, the less chance there is of anything being passed on. The Forest School leader will have a tick remover at all sessions in case any are found on visible parts of participants.

To avoid the risk of tick bites we ask that ALL participants wear long trousers and long sleeves and insect repellent if available. Please ensure that when they are home they are thoroughly checked all over for ticks, including their head, hairline and neck. If a tick is found it should be removed with a tick remover tool (from chemists) and antiseptic applied to the bite. For more information, please see

[**www.lymediseaseuk.com**](http://www.lymediseaseuk.com)

**Manual Handling**

Tasks at Forest School involving manual handling may include carrying and moving equipment or natural items, such as logs, to set up the site, or helping a learner up if they have fallen. It is important that these tasks are carried out carefully to avoid injury and that the Forest School leader and assistants model good practice to learners.

**Fire and Tools**

Campfires are an important part of Forest School and we aim to offer at least one session including fire to every group. They are a chance to teach learners about the dangers of fire and how to respect it. Learners will be taught how to keep themselves, and others, safe around the fire and a fire will not be included in their first session.

The use of tools at Forest School aims to develop physical skills and confidence, and teaches learners how to manage risks safely. They will not be used at every session, and only when the Forest School Leader has observed a group and considers them ready. A risk benefit assessment will be carried out prior to the session and a tool will be used for a particular activity that is age and skill appropriate to the learners.

**Toilet**

All participants will be encouraged to go to the toilet before attending sessions. Where appropriate, there will be a camp toilet located in a tent and during a group’s first session they will be shown the procedure for using this. Soap and water will be provided to wash their hands.

**Safeguarding**

All adults working or helping at Forest School have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of each young person in their care. The Forest School leader and woodland assistants will hold a PVG certificate to ensure they can work with children.

**Last reviewed:** 03/02/24