Forest School
At
The Hillier Gardens

Led by Dawn Morgan

The Hillier Arboretum is a registered charity (no. 274737) managed and financed by:
Forest School ethos

Forest School is a long term (minimum 6 weeks), child led, educational process that supports holistic development of children through a mix of play, exploration and learning.

Forest School builds on skills and, through leader observations, matches successful activities with individual children’s preferred style of learning to increase self confidence and promote good self esteem through positive encouragement from a key person or ‘significant other’.

Aims of Forest School

- To support the social and emotional development of children through play in a natural outdoor environment.
- To support the physical development of children through active games and tasks.
- To build self confidence and self esteem in children and young people.
- To give children and young people the skills and tools to succeed and be happy.
Role of the Forest School leader

To develop the role of a ‘significant other’ over a period of time with children in order to encourage development of self esteem by matching tasks and activities to individual children. This process develops through observations and evaluations, and development of relationships founded on trust.

The Forest School leader is responsible for the safety and wellbeing of the group and risk assesses the site, daily conditions and all activities before and during the session.

Role of volunteers/helpers

To support the Forest School leader with tasks, head counting and supporting the children’s learning and development through asking/answering questions and responding to play cues without ‘adult-erating’ the play.

Role of parents/helpers

To also support children's learning and development as above and to help children recognise dangers such as fungi, berries, germs, trip hazards etc.

Forest School Rules

- We do not eat anything we find.
- Our hands must be kept out of mouths during Forest School.
- We must stay within the boundary markers when at our special site.
- 1 duck call means stand still, 2 duck calls means come back to log circle.
- No walking through the fire circle.
- ‘No such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes’ children must be dressed appropriately.
- At Forest School we care for all living things and take particular care of our special site, we do not pick flowers or plants.
Cancellation procedure

Forest School will continue in most types of weather with the exception of high winds, thunder or severe cold. The Forest School leader will call parents using consent form contact details to inform of a cancellation of the session with at least 1 hour notice.

Toileting procedure

Children’s toilets are located in the education building. If a child needs to go whilst out in the woods, parents can accompany either accompany them back to the building or to a tree/bush on the other side of our boundary markers. The Forest School leader can supply antibacterial hand gel and wipes.

Lost/missing child procedure

All leaders and volunteers are responsible for maintaining regular headcounts. If a child is discovered missing, the group will retrace steps whilst calling out the child's name for 5 minutes. If the child is still missing the Forest School leader will radio front desk for assistance. The volunteer helpers will escort the remainder of the group back to the main building whilst the Forest School leader and other staff/ adults continue the search. If the child is not found after a reasonable time the Forest School leader will discuss calling the Police with the parents.

• It is important adults alert the Forest School leader immediately if a child is missing.
• We ask all adults to praise good behaviour and allow children the freedom to explore and play without adult interruption where possible.
• Please ensure your child wears stout footwear and dresses appropriately for the weather (sun cream/ hats/ wellies/ raincoats/ layers of clothing in cold weather etc.)
**Safeguarding children policy**

Forest School takes safeguarding of children and young people very seriously. All leaders are first aid trained and qualified to lead. Hampshire County Council operates a safer recruitment policy and all staff and volunteers are aware of the child protection policy including procedures in place to respond to disclosures or allegations. Any incidents are recorded in writing by the Forest School leader and discussed with the designated child protection officer as soon as possible.

Lone working is not acceptable. Permission to take photographs of children at Forest School (for learning and development purposes or publications) is required from the parents on the consent form.

The Forest School leader has a duty of care to promote the wellbeing and security of the group and will take appropriate steps to ensure the Every Child Matters outcomes are aspired to for all children.

**Behaviour policy**

We do expect children to behave differently outside compared to inside, however it is our responsibility to ensure all children feel safe, respected and valued. If a child’s behaviour puts themselves or other children at risk, we will ask them to stop, if the behaviour does not stop, we will ask the parents to intervene. If the bad behaviour continues we may have to end our Forest School session. We expect the children to follow the Forest School rules and behave accordingly. We expect children to respect the plants and animals and help us to look after the wildlife and our special site. Forest School will not tolerate bullying of any kind.

The Forest School ethos is to build on skills in small steps, once the children and leaders have developed a trust and the children have shown they are ready, the leader will introduce more advanced skills such as tool use and fire with close supervision.
Tool use policies

All tools are cleaned, maintained and stored securely by the Forest School leader. Prior to use, the Forest School leader will check the tools for any damage or instability and check for sharpness. Tools are transported to Forest School in a locked, dry container. Children must not wear gloves on their tool hands (as they can affect grip) or wear loose clothing or loose hair. Only the Forest School leader’s tools can be used at Forest School.

- Potato peelers (to practice the action of scraping a blade away from themselves to peel vegetables etc.)

The Forest School leader will demonstrate a safe seated position and the scraping action away from the body using the dominate hand. The other hand to be placed a safe distance from the peeling. These tools can be supervised on a 1:1 basis with other adults e.g. child with parent.

- Fixed blade knives (for whittling sticks)

The Forest School leader will decide if the age group/ individual child is ready for using this tool. Prior to use the application of the tool will be discussed with the child/ren including the emergency ‘Tool Down’ procedure. The Forest School leader will demonstrate safe use with children on a 1:1 basis. Starting with the 3 point safety stance and checking there is a safe distance from others around the tool user, safely removing the sheath and holding handle with the dominant hand. The other hand manipulates the stick above the whittling area, keeping the knife work safely in front of the body. The Forest School leader demonstrates the scraping technique and closely supervises the child whilst using the tool. Knives must be re sheathed and returned to the secure container immediately after use.

- Bow saw (for cutting wood into discs)

The Forest School leader will decide if the age group/ individual child is ready for using this tool. Prior to use the application of the tool will be discussed with the child/ren including the emergency ‘Tool Down’ procedure. The Forest
School leader will demonstrate safe use with children on a 1:1 basis. Starting with the safe standing stance and checking there is a safe distance from others around the tool user. The Forest School leader will demonstrate the sawing technique with the blade cover on showing the children how to hold the tool safely in the knuckle grip and how to hold the wood securely on the A frame with the other hand to keep it safe from the blade. Depending on the age of the child, the leader may take the opposite end of the bow saw to assist the child with the sawing motion, each taking turns to push. The Forest School leader closely supervises the child whilst using the tool. The Bow saw must be resheathed and returned to the secure container immediately after use.

- Hand drill (for drilling holes into wood for craft purposes)

The Forest School leader will decide if the age group/individual child is ready for using this tool. Prior to use the application of the tool will be discussed with the child/ren including the emergency ‘Tool Down’ procedure. The Forest School leader will demonstrate safe use with children on a 1:1 basis. Starting with the 3 point safety stance and checking there is a safe distance from others around the tool user. The Forest School leader will demonstrate the drilling technique on an appropriate wood block showing the children how to hold the tool safely with both hands, keeping vertical, and how to wedge the wood securely on the block with a G clamp to avoid slippage. The Forest School leader closely supervises the child whilst using the tool. The hand drill must be returned to the secure container immediately after use.

**Fire Circle Rules**

- We do not run around the Fire Circle.
- We do not walk across the Fire Circle to get to the other side.
- We only enter the Fire Circle when instructed by the Forest School Leader.
- No loose clothing or loose hair in the Fire Circle.
Fire Safety procedures

During the Forest School process, a careful regard and respect of fire is reinforced with the children through a step by step process. Strict fire circle rules are enforced at all times and behaviour is controlled by the Forest School leader and parents to ensure safety. Fire may be introduced using Storm Kettles (a small contained fire for boiling water) and when trust has been developed between the leaders and children, a fire in the fire pit may be constructed for campfire cooking.

Before fires are built, provision for putting out the fire is made with water buckets (and fire blankets for emergencies) at hand. The Forest School leader will assess the site for overhanging vegetation and clear forest floor debris to avoid fire spread. Fire is never left unattended and the Forest School leader will ensure it is out cold using plenty of water before leaving the area.

Storm Kettles procedure

Light a small fire in the base, fill the kettle with water and leave the kettle UNPLUGGED. Put the kettle on top of the fire tray and slowly feed the fire with thin twigs until the water is boiling. Lift kettle from fire using the handle and tip by pulling on the plug which is attached to the base. Fire is never left unattended and the Forest School leader will ensure it is out cold using plenty of water before leaving the area.

Food hygiene

When handling campfire food, hands must be cleaned using antibacterial wipes or hand gel. Food should be stored at the appropriate temperature before the session and transported to Forest School in a hygienic airtight container. Children’s hands should be cleaned with wipes or hand gel before handling and eating. Food containers should be taken back to be cleaned/disposed of appropriately and no litter should be left as we always aim to leave the site as we find it.
Parental consent

Parents/guardians are required to fill out a consent form before the start of Forest School covering the use of tools and fire with 1:1 supervision, administration of first aid/medications, emergency contact details and the use of photographs taken at Forest School.

Confidentiality

Information on consent forms are treated confidentially and kept securely between Forest School sessions. Any information given on a child will be kept confidential unless the information conflicts with safeguarding procedures.

Equal Opportunities

Forest School, as part of the education department, strives to maintain equal opportunities for all children and young people. The Forest School leader will aim to make the sessions as inclusive as possible if given notice of any disabilities or difficulties prior to the start of Forest School.

First aid and emergency procedure

The Forest School leader is an ITC trained outdoor first aider and will carry the first aid kit and be primarily responsible for administering first aid. The Forest School leader also carries a radio to contact the front desk staff if further help or an ambulance is required. In the event of a serious accident an ambulance will be called, the Forest School leader will remain with the casualty and the volunteer helpers will escort the remainder of the group back to the main building.

Essential equipment

First Aid Kit (containing disposable gloves, wound dressings, triangular bandages, hypoallergenic plasters, an eye pad, safety pins, scissors, face shield, adhesive tape and antibacterial wipes), hand gel, tarpaulin, rope, radio, ice packs, water, matches and tinder, fire flint, fire blanket, water buckets.
Risk assessment

The Hillier Garden’s Education Service has a generic risk assessment which is annually reviewed. The Forest School site risk assessment (below) is regularly reviewed and the Forest School leader will complete a daily risk assessment as detailed on page 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hazard</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Controls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canopy and Shrub level</td>
<td>Dead branch/tree fall</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Daily checks, steer group away from overhang danger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Injury from thorns/low branches etc. Berries, fruit and flowers that may be poisonous.</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Verbal warning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field layer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teach children not to eat anything and keep hands out of mouths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Close supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground level</td>
<td>Slips, trips and falls. Litter e.g. glass, metal. Fungi that may be poisonous.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Close supervision, verbal warning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Daily check of Forest School area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teach children not to eat anything and keep hands out of mouths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Close supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous weather conditions</td>
<td>High winds (branch fall) and lightning could cause injury/death.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Forest School cancelled in these conditions. Parents informed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to other weather conditions</td>
<td>Cold and hot injuries.</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Suitable clothing advised such as layers in winter, spare equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>available to loan. Sun cream/hats advised in summer. Be aware of signs of exposure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage ditch and pond</td>
<td>Drowning, exposure.</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>Close supervision, verbal warnings, first aid training &amp; emergency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>equipment carried.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals on site</td>
<td>Lymes disease from deer ticks &amp; Weils disease from rat urine.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Give parents advice leaflet about Lymes disease and ticks. Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clothing advised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Open wounds covered with plasters, hand washing after activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of tools</td>
<td>Injury from tool use.</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>See tool procedures on page 6 &amp; 7 of Handbook. First aid training and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>equipment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of fire</td>
<td>Burn/Scold injuries from Kelly Kettles and fire pit.</td>
<td>Med</td>
<td>See fire procedures on page 8 of Handbook. First aid training and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>equipment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Daily operating procedure

The Forest School leader will complete a Daily Risk Assessment before each Forest School session using the template form and signing with a date. Factors such as the weather conditions, and changes to the Forest School site such as fallen branches, litter etc. are considered and risk controls are put in place to minimise risks.

If the session will involve tool use, the Forest School leader will check the tools for safety before the session. Safety checks include checking the blades are sharp and sharpening or replacing if necessary, checking there is no damage to the tool or handles, visually and manually by flexing the tool. The required tools are put into a secure container for transporting to the Forest School site.

The essential equipment (see page 9) is checked and packed into a rucksack and carried by the Forest School leader to the site. The Forest School leader will also hold the emergency details for each child during each session and the risk assessments. The Group are met and greeted at the Education Department, a register is taken and name labels distributed. The Forest School leader will lead the group to the Forest School site and commence the session.

The generic, site and daily risk assessments are dynamic documents and if there are any changes to the risks, the appropriate controls are put in place and the risk assessments are reviewed and amended.

The Forest School leader will lead the session, ensure the group are safe and happy, and observe the children’s interests and learning styles.

At the end of the session the Forest School leader will lead the group back to the Education Department for a plenary and goodbye.

The Forest School leader will reflect and evaluate the session to aid planning for the next sessions.

After the session, the Forest School leader will carry out cleaning and maintenance of tools, using oily rags, sharpening or replacing if necessary and storing away safely.