



Lansdowne School  
49 Combermere Road  
London  
SW9 9QD  
Tel: 020-7737-3713  
Executive Headteacher: Linda Adams *M.Ed,*  
*PGCSE (Autism)*  
Email Address:  
executiveheadteacher@lansdowne.lambet  
h.sch.uk



1.9.2023

Dear parent / carer,

The purpose of this letter is to give you some detailed information about Lansdowne's Forest School sessions – and to invite your child to join us weekly on \_\_\_\_\_s.

If you have any questions that aren't answered here, please ask us; we want to share the enthusiasm we have for this relatively new venture with you.

We also have a Forest School handbook which contains all of our detailed policies and procedures. This is available for you to read via the school office.

## **The Ethos Behind Forest School**

Forest School is the name for an approach to educating students in the outdoors on a regular basis, over the long term. This is in order that, alongside their learning, students can develop a relationship with and love of the outdoors.

It is student led, so once students have an understanding of the various opportunities that the outdoors present, they will be in control of how we spend our time.

Forest School is a holistic approach to learning and development, and aims to develop the whole child – physically, mentally, emotionally, socially etc.

Students will be provided with opportunities to take managed risks in order to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence.

## **Where the students will be going and how they will get there**

Sessions take place at The South London Scout Centre (The Fort). The students are taken there by the school mini bus, along with 2 or 3 members of staff.

The sessions are held on \_\_\_\_\_ **mornings**. The site is private and we will be working within a clearly defined boundary.

For some activities (eg den building, nature walks) we walk a very short distance into Dulwich woods. The public uses this space, but students are accompanied at all times and they are warned about how to engage with dogs.

## **Staffing and ratios**

The ratio for the sessions is at least 1 adult for every 3 students.

The Forest School leader is Mr Hilton. Mr Hilton is a qualified level 3 Forest School leader and is outdoor first aid trained.

As in school, all staff who attend Forest School will hold an up to date DBS check.

## **What the students need to bring**

It is important that students are dressed appropriately for the weather, and come prepared for unexpected weather changes.

If your child arrives without appropriate clothing, we will do our best to equip them but it is not guaranteed that they will be able to take part in the session.

Please note: **students should come to school dressed in their forest school clothes**. If it is particularly wet they may want to bring a change of clothes to change into when they return to school (they can change into their PE kit if they don't have a change of clothing with them).

## **Kit List**

- **Wellies or walking boots** - trainers are not suitable
- Warm layers in colder months – **vests, jumpers / fleeces, thick socks**. It is much better to have several thinner layers than one thick layer
- **Warm hat and gloves** in colder months
- **Waterproof coat and trousers**
- Long sleeve tops and trousers (no shorts – even in the summer); these help to prevent ticks, stings, bites and scratches
- Sun hat and sun screen in summer - even though we have coverage from the trees the site is quite open

Clearly clothing requirements will change with the seasons – and sometimes even from day to day! So please keep an eye on the forecast and dress your child appropriately.

Please also remember to label all clothing.

## **What will the students be doing at Forest School?**

Whilst at Forest School students will enjoy a range of activities as well as supervised but unstructured play.

Each session will have a plan; however, plans will be flexible so that they can be guided by events, and by what the students want to do.

Examples of the types of structured activities the students will participate in are:

- Shelter building
- Fire making
- Tree and leaf recognition
- Conservation
- Bug hunting
- Arts and crafts
- Tree climbing
- Cooking
- Whittling
- Story telling

We will make the most of the unique resources available by using lots of natural materials.

We will also work (with appropriate adult supervision) with tools and fire in order to encourage confidence, self-esteem, independence and team work.

Forest School sessions will follow a structure so that the students quickly feel comfortable.

We will begin sessions by setting up camp: putting up a shelter to protect us from the rain, and building a fire to keep us warm.

We will then play a game to warm up.

We will introduce a new main activity each session.

Sessions will end with some social time around the fire. We will normally cook a marshmallow and have a hot drink, and play a group game.

The Forest School leader will ensure that the programme for Forest School is fun and of educational value.

## **Risk Assessments and safety information**

The Forest School hand book contains the risk assessments for the Forest School and its activities.

These will be updated as necessary to take seasonal changes/conditions into account.

In addition, the site will be assessed before each session starts. The health and safety of the students and adults is paramount at all times throughout any activity and session.

An integral part of the Forest School experience is that students will experience the outdoors in all weathers.

With the exception of high winds and thunderstorms, please assume that your child will be outside when they take part in Forest School, even if it is a shortened session.

Insurance for all the Forest School activities is included within the school's policy.

Our policies reflect the school policies but are adapted for the Forest School environment.

## **Tool use**

Using a small hand tool is an important part of Forest School as it enables the students to develop new practical skills that help them to develop self-confidence.

Over time, students will learn to use various tools such as vegetable peelers, sheath knives and hand saws.

An inventory of tools will be maintained and all tools will be checked, cleaned and stored in a secure box at the end of a session to ensure they remain safe to use.

Rules are set out clearly at the beginning of each session.

## **Fire safety**

A small camp-fire is an integral part of all Forest Schools.

We will regularly use a fire during sessions, and will normally end with a warm drink and a snack cooked on the fire.

Fire safety is therefore an extremely important aspect of Forest School.

The key points of fire safety are:

- The fire is only lit in the designated area
- The fire is in a drum / pan to prevent the spread of fire
- Students are seated / stood in a circle, 1 meter away from the fire. Students are not allowed to walk across the circle; if they get up to move, they step back out of the circle and walk around the outside
- Fires will normally be lit by an adult (or a student under close adult supervision); students may be allowed to feed the fire under close adult supervision and following strict rules
- The fire will always be supervised by an adult when lit and will never be left unattended
- There will always be a fire bucket of water and a fire blanket by the fire circle
- The students will be taught of the fire circle rules at their first visit to Forest School, and then reminded weekly thereafter

Please note: **if your child has asthma, we can position them 'upstream' and / or at a greater distance from the fire** so that they aren't overly exposed to smoke.

Additionally, we try to keep smoke to a minimum by only making small fires and using pre-dried wood.

## **Cooking and eating**

The following principles will always be followed:

- All food is stored in airtight containers
- Only clean equipment is used
- All staff are aware, and have a copy of special dietary needs of students with food allergies and any medication will be in the Forest School leaders bag
- Everyone should wash their hands before handling food and drink (using anti-bacterial wipes or gel)
- Food will be cooked correctly
- All equipment and waste is cleared away from the woods.

## **Toilet arrangements**

Students are encouraged to use the toilet before leaving school.

If the need arises whilst at Forest School, students will be escorted by a member of staff to and from the toilets.

## **In case of emergency**

If there is an injury to adults or students:

- Staff are trained in first aid
- Staff who are not involved in administering first aid will ensure the safety of the other students in the group
- Emergency services will be alerted if necessary
- Accident forms will be completed (and parents will receive a copy)
- Parents will be informed. It is essential that we have up to date contact details for all parents/carers and all emergency contacts
- If you need to contact us, you should do this through the school office

## **Environmental consideration and Conservation**

One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness. Students are taught to respect and take responsibility for the world around them.

Students are encouraged to respect their environment and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them.

We encourage students not to pick flowers/plants/trees, due to safety and environmental consideration.

Where possible, and if appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our Forest School site.

## **Things to remember:**

- There is no such thing as bad weather, just inappropriate clothing!
- Students will be tired, especially in the early weeks of starting Forest School
- They may get muddy
- They may get stung by insects or nettles but staff are trained to manage this
- They may get minor bumps and scrapes during their adventures

**Finally:** we hope your child enjoys their time at Forest School and makes memories that will last a lifetime!

.....*Please detach and return this sheet*.....

## **Lansdowne Forest School Permission Form**

**Child's name** .....

- I understand that my child will have to bring their own outdoor clothing and footwear for Forest School sessions
- I understand that my child will be transported to Forest School in the mini bus
- I understand that my child may, at an appropriate level, have the opportunity to work with hand tools and small fires through the course of their Forest School session
- I understand that, on occasions, my child may walk with the group (with adult supervision) into Dulwich woods and to the local shops (eg to buy resources)

- I am happy for my child to attend Forest School this term **Yes / No**

Name of Parent/Carer.....

Signed.....

Date.....