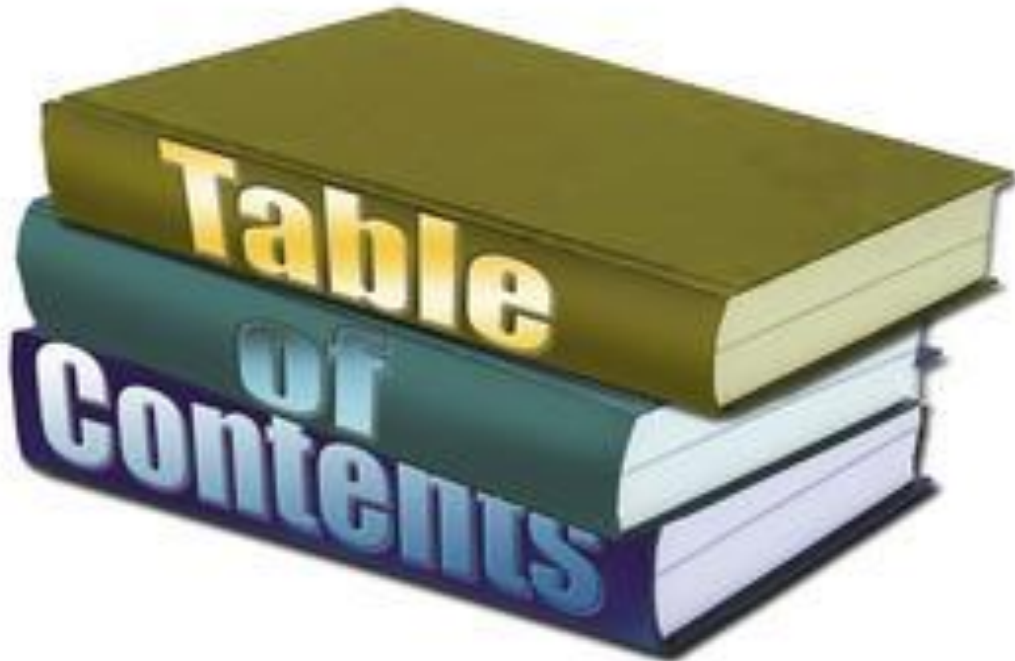


# Lennoxtown Nursery Forest Kindergarten Handbook.



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## **Introduction**

*“There is significant evidence that playing outdoors is more than just fun: it can contribute positively to child development, child health, and early learning.”*  
(Care Inspectorate, 2016)

Forest Kindergarten sessions support child-centred learning through play, in a 'real world' context. They provide children with freedom to explore, using their senses and promote health and well-being. Forest Kindergarten promote confidence, physical and emotional resilience, the acquisition of knowledge and skills. They also develop and promote a respect for the natural environment.

Forest kindergarten sessions will offer the children regular opportunities to learn through play in a natural setting. These sessions will be child led and child centered and take place weekly for a block of Four weeks.

The Forest Kindergarten sessions will have a high adult to child ratio, links to the curriculum and take place in almost all weathers, all year round.

Young children need to take risks to learn about and understand their own capabilities; Forest Kindergarten allows them to take risks in a safe and supportive environment.

All pre-school children will have the opportunity to participate in a block Forest Kindergarten sessions at some point throughout the year.



### Aims of our Forest Kindergarten Sessions

- To promote enjoyment of and respect for the natural environment.
- To develop self-confidence and self-esteem.
- To build motivation and a desire for learning.
- To offer children opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning.
- To encourage the formation of positive relationships with others, to develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others.
- To encourage cooperation and teamworking.
- To develop problem solving skills.
- To encourage creativity and self-expression.
- To support health and well-being.
- To be inclusive.
- To build links with the local community.



## **Health and Safety**

There are considered risks involved in Forest Kindergarten due to the learning context and we will work to minimize these by taking the following actions within every session:-

- Conducting a site appraisal prior to beginning the project and where possible reducing any risks such as broken branches that could fall or dog poo.
- Conducting a visual risk assessment prior to each session before entering the site.
- Ensuring that a member of staff trained in Forest Kindergarten and first aid is always present. All other staff and volunteers will receive ongoing instruction and guidance from the trained leader.
- Maintaining adult to child ratios at a very high level.
- Safety session prior to 1<sup>st</sup> session on site.
- Continued safety reminders throughout the block.
- Setting of boundaries.
- Although we aim to take the children to site in all weathers there are times when this will not be safe. If there are high winds or fog then the session will be postponed.
- The leader will have a register and mobile phone with emergency contact details for all children, staff and volunteers.
- The leader will carry any medical/dietary information and medications that may be required as well as general first aid box.

## **Practical Skills and safe use of equipment**

### **Ropes**

- All equipment to be regularly checked for fraying etc.
- Children will not wrap rope around their bodies.
- Children will be encouraged to learn to tie and undo simple knots.
- If tying between trees, the rope will be visible and not cause a trip or choke hazard.

## Kelly Kettle



- The Kelly Kettle will only be lit in designated area and surrounded by a safe zone.
- Safe fire-lighting equipment will be used with no accelerants.
- An adult will be located at the fire at all times.
- Suitable accident prevention and management will be next to site.
- Tools and water will be available to extinguish fire.
- Site will be made safe on completion of activity





## **Policy & Procedures**

The Forest Kindergarten sessions will operate in line with all East Dunbartonshire Council and Lennoxton Nursery Procedures with some additions.

### **Confidentiality Policy**

All forest school staff and volunteers will adhere to the confidentiality policy.

### **Medical and personal information**

- All adults will be made aware of any medical details such as allergies affecting the children attending on a need to know basis and this information will be kept confidentially within the leaders' information.
- In case of emergency, contact numbers of each child will be kept by the leader.
- Only trained staff will apply first aid to children and adults attending; volunteers must make staff aware if they are approached by a child needing care.
- Any adults attending, with medical conditions, must disclose to the Forest School Leader; this information will be treated with the utmost confidentiality

### **Photographic and Video permissions**

- As part of the permission to attend Forest School sessions, parents will be asked to agree to their child being photographed or filmed for observational, training or school promotion purposes; any child without this permission will be recorded in the leaders information pack.
- Only school cameras and iPads will be used for this purpose.
- Volunteers will only use school cameras under the guidance of the Forest School Leader.
- Mobile phones will only be used for emergency purposes.

### **Child Protection**

Staff and volunteers will adhere to East Dunbartonshire Child Protection policy at all times. Should a child disclose any information to staff or volunteers this will immediately be passed to the Head Teacher by telephone. A decision will then be

made as to an appropriate time to return to the nursery. On return to the nursery the staff member or volunteer will report to the Head Teacher and then follow the relevant procedure.

### **Communication Strategy**

Clear communication is essential for the smooth running of Forest Kindergarten. Children and adults need to listen carefully to rules, boundaries and instructions, linked to safety procedures and activities. There will always be time for questions or comments from children and adults.

- All adults attending will have received a copy of the Emergency Action Plan which will be kept in the leaders information pack.
- Any staff or volunteers attending Forest School must meet prior to leaving nursery to review ratios, health and safety and risk assessment for the day.
- If any adult cannot attend the session, they must give as much notice as possible and preferably 24 hours. If a replacement cannot be found the session will need to be cancelled due to inadequate ratios of child to adult.
- The Forest School Leader will have a mobile phone for emergency use.
- Our current site is managed by East Dunbartonshire Council who has responsibility for keeping the site safe and maintained on a long term basis.
- A copy of this Handbook will be available on the school website and a paper copy will also be available on request.
- Parents will receive general information letters before sessions begin and a permission slip.
- There will be a parents' meeting and/or opportunity for an informal chat with the Forest School Leader before sessions begin.
- Basic session information will be shared with children and staff prior to the visit; rules will be discussed and practised in the nursery setting.

The Depute Head of Centre, Isabel Bott will be responsible for communication between East Dunbartonshire Council and the nursery.

### **Contact Numbers**

Any accidents or incidents will be reported to parents and the nursery office at the earliest opportunity. Any changes of contact numbers should be given to the nursery office.



## **Forest Kindergarten Hygiene Policy**

### **Toileting:**

- Children will be encouraged to use the toilet before leaving nursery.
- A designated private toilet area will be set up for each session.
- A member of staff will accompany the children to the area.
- Wet wipes will be available for personal use and hand-cleaning.
- All waste will be bagged and removed from the site in a sealed container and disposed of at the nursery.
- If a child has a wetting or soiling accident, they will be changed by a member of staff in a private area on site.

### **Hand Washing:**

- Whenever possible, soap and water from our solar water pouch will be used for handwashing at snack time.
- Disposable paper towels will be used for drying and bagged for disposal.
- Each member of staff, volunteer and child will have antibacterial gel.

### **Snack Time:**

- Food hygiene regulations will be adhered during snack time
- Children will wash and dry hands and sit on the mat in the base camp when consuming any food or drink.
- Each child will have their own bottle of drinking water and snack box.
- On very cold days we will use a Kelly Kettle to provide the children, staff and volunteers with a warm drink.

### **Adult to Child Ratios**

Each outdoor Forest Kindergarten session will include a max 8 children and a minimum of 2 adults.

The sessions will be led by a member of staff who has been trained as a Forest Kindergarten leader and at least one other member of staff. There will be at least one member of staff trained in first aid on every session. In order to achieve the desired adult to child ratios we will require the support of at least 2 volunteers.

Each volunteer will require to have a full PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) check completed. These volunteers could be parents, grandparents, students or any other suitable person. Each volunteer will need to commit to at least the full four week block to ensure consistency for the group of children participating. If a volunteer wished, they could attend more than one block.

### **Trained Forest Kindergarten Leaders**

Isabel Bott (First aid Trained)

Jenna Todd

Gwen Hendren

Donna Marshall (First aid Trained)

## Clothing

*“There’s no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing.”*

*Scandinavian proverb*

As the children and adults will be outdoors in all types of weather then it is essential that they have the correct clothing. The nursery will provide high quality waterproof, warm and breathable outdoor clothing but parents will also have a responsibility that their child is dressed appropriately for the sessions. The nursery will also provide the same high quality outdoor wear for staff and volunteers.

The table on the next page is a guide to how to dress for Forest Kindergarten sessions. The table shows all the layers that are needed for the coldest weather therefore may not all be needed all the time. It is essential though the children and adults always wear a long sleeve top and long trousers for safety reasons. It is easy to take a layer off if someone is too warm, so add an extra layer if unsure and remember that we will be in the woods for at least 2 ½ hrs per session.



## How to Dress for Forest Kindergarten Sessions

Layer	For Children	For Adults
<p><b>Base</b> A base layer is the layer closest to your skin, if people are very active and producing sweat, the base layer becomes very important. If you are sweating the base layer needs to wick moisture away from the skin to keep you dry. The base layer should fit snugly in order to enhance its insulating properties. Synthetic layers such as polyester or polypropylene are better than cotton as this can become wet through sweating.</p>	<p>Tight-ish fitting thin long sleeve t shirt. Vest, tights &amp; long johns (if very cold)</p>	<p>Tight-ish fitting long sleeve tee shirt. Vest, tights, long johns (if very cold)</p>
	<p>Avoid collars and hoods any bunching and added bulk around the neck and chest can be restrictive when further layers are added.</p>	
<p><b>MID</b> The purpose of the mid-layer is to provide warmth through trapped air. Typically a mid-layer is a fleece or wool layer. A mid-layer usually has some loft to it to help trap the warm air, but is also breathable so it does not retain sweat.</p>	<p>Tight-ish fitting thin fleece, sweat shirt or jumper.</p>	<p>Tight-ish fitting thin fleece, sweat shirt or jumper.</p>
	<p>Avoid hoods, this is because an outer jacket will usually have one. Having too many makes clothing tight around the neck and means the inner hood often gets bunched up and stuck down under other clothing.</p>	
<p><b>Insulation</b> The insulation layer, whether natural, synthetic or down, provides extra loft and therefore warmth that is essential on very cold days. Ideally the insulated layer needs to fit snugly over the mid layer allowing for movement. When the weather is dry but cold this insulated layer could be worn without a waterproof outer layer. Material that is more breathable such as wool or fleece allows the wind through so it is important to have an outer windproof layer either built in or added as the outer shell layer.</p>	<p>Coat, down jacket, thick fleece, sweatshirt or jumper. <b>The waterproofs the nursery have purchased have this layer built in.</b></p>	<p>Coat, down jacket, thick fleece, sweatshirt or jumper.</p>
<p><b>Waterproof</b> This is the single most important layer to get right, if this is correct then as long as you have some warm clothing underneath, irrespective of number of layers or material type, then you are much more likely to remain protected from the damp and cold. <b>These will be provided by the nursery.</b></p>	<p>Jacket Dungarees Fleece lined Mitts</p>	<p>Jacket Trousers Fleece lined Gloves</p>
<p><b>Head, hands and feet</b> If the head and hands are exposed then a lot of heat can be lost through them. It is also important that feet are dry and warm.</p>	<p>A warm hat Glove or mittens (mittens are easier for children to put on) Waterproof mittens (<b>These will be provided by the nursery.</b>) Warm socks Boots are better than wellies as they are warmer and wellies tend to be slippery</p>	<p>A warm hat Gloves Warm socks Walking boots are better than wellies as they are warmer and wellies tend to be slippery</p>

## Equipment List

All the equipment other than clothing and footwear required will be provided by the nursery.

### **Leaders Kit**

- List of emergency contacts for all children and adults participating.
- Outdoor first aid kit.
- Register, medical information and emergency plan.
- I-pad.
- Emergency shelter.
- Tree, plant and wildlife identification book.
- Mobile Phone



### **General Kit**

- Tarpaulins
- Bungee ropes
- Clips
- Water bag
- Paper towels
- Soap
- Tissues
- Rubbish bag
- Spare clothing
- Ropes
- String
- Wipes & hand wash
- Kelly Kettle
- Nappy sacks
- Spare clothing



## Children's Kit

The children will be supplied with a backpack containing the following:

- Magnifying glass
- Note book & pens
- Map of the area
- Snack
- Antibacterial gel



## **Typical Block and Session Description**

Each block will consist of 4 weekly sessions. As not all children attend the nursery every day, the day and time for each block will change to allow pre-school children to attend.

For each trip to the forest a child will be chosen as the leader and another child as the ender. To build the children's confidence the adults will not walk in front of the lead child but level with them, and the same at the back.

Each child will have a small backpack (provided by the nursery) containing the items listed on the previous page. In addition they may have to carry some of the group resources along with staff and volunteers.

### **Session 1**

The 1<sup>st</sup> session in each block will begin indoors and the purpose of this will be to introduce the children to the concept of Forest Kindergarten. They will be given some important safety information such as the importance of listening to adults, what risks to look out for, the importance of boundaries, plants to avoid i.e. nettles and fungi and how to react should a dog or insect enter the camp. Other safety issues such as road safety (travelling to and from the site), stranger danger and emergency evacuation procedure will also be explained to the children. The children will make their own wood cookies and boundary markers during this session which they will take to woods every session.

During this first trip to the site the children and staff will identify a boundary for their camp, each child will select a tree and their boundary marker will be attached (these will be added to the trees each week).

This first step in every on site visit will be for a member of staff to visually risk assess the site for any hazards that may have arisen since the previous site visit and address these accordingly.

### **Session 2-3**

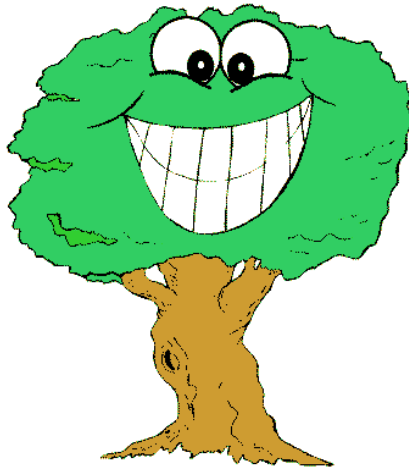
Group will walk to the site and set up the camp, the children then explore and play with the support of the adults. Staff and children may decide to change the camp boundaries as the children's confidence increases.



In the time between each session staff will revisit the Forest Kindergarten sessions with the children and create a floorbook page to record the children's experiences.

#### **Sessions 4**

This will be the group's final sessions and will follow the same format as all the sessions but we would like to invite friends and family along at the end of the session to join us in celebrating the children's achievements as we present them with their certificates. This will also be an opportunity for the children's families to see how they have used the site and hopefully will continue to do so in the future with their them.



## The Curriculum

We will be using the experiences and outcomes from the Curriculum for Excellence to evaluate the children learning while they attend Forest Kindergarten sessions.

The learning will be completely led by the children's previous experiences, interests and other factors such as weather.

We will record the children's learning in a floorbook and on learning journals to allow them to revisit and extend their experiences as well as plan what they would like to do on their next visit to woods. Children's experiences will also be discussed at planning meetings where staff can further develop and extend the children's learning through every day nursery experiences.

The floorbook will be available for children to share with the family members when they are dropped off or collected from nursery.

