



Chertsey and Dorking Nursery Schools and Mole Valley Family Centre

WOODLAND GARDEN AND FOREST SCHOOL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

We aim to offer the children regular opportunities to enjoy learning and play in our woodland garden, drawing on their interests and imagination. Through using the woodland, children are able to develop a lifelong love and understanding of the natural environment, whilst developing their self-esteem, confidence and social skills as well as their physical skills. We want the children's woodland and forest school experiences to carry over into the nursery classroom. We wish to encourage parents to extend their children's experiences by visiting local woodlands as a family and to value the outdoor environment.

All the children in the nurseries will have the opportunity to experience sessions throughout the year.

Environmental Considerations and Conservation

We plan to promote environmental awareness, encourage sustainability and teach children and parents to value the outdoor environment and visit local woodlands as a family. The children are taught about respect for wildlife and responsibility for the world around them and to be aware of conservation issues of the woodland around them.

Safeguarding of Children in the woodland garden

The safeguarding of children is of utmost importance at all times and this policy is an addendum to our Health and Safety and Safeguarding Policies and Risk Assessments.

Through use of the woodland we aim for the children to develop early risk assessment strategies and understand that their actions have consequences. The leader is responsible for all health and safety procedures.

We will establish and maintain a safe and healthy environment by:

- Ensuring the provision of sufficient information and instruction for all adults, including volunteers as appropriate, so that they can contribute to their own health and safety and that of the children they are working with
- Establishing and being completely familiar with, all emergency procedures including the reporting and recording of procedures
- Ensuring that the designated risk assessments are undertaken by the group leader before children of families are permitted on to the site e.g. including checking whole site for debris.
- Ensure that the appropriate risk assessments are completed on the Evolve system and approved by the Educational Visits Coordinator prior to the start of sessions. See Educational Visits Policy
- Ensuring that all Volunteers (if appropriate) understand their responsibilities towards the children and the safeguarding procedures
- Investigating any accidents and using information gathered to inform future risk assessment and policy making
- Ensuring that at least one appropriately qualified first aider is on-site
- Teaching all members of the party to maintain their own and others health and safety by involving them in the risk assessment process at appropriate opportunities
- Maintaining the legal adult-child ratio
- Ensuring that all equipment is in good working order and is used appropriately
- Securing the woodland shed at all times and only allowing access by staff
- Ensuring security gates and boundaries are secure.
- Keeping the pond gate shut at all times (Dorking). Strict adult child ratios will be adhered to in the pond area, whilst maintaining correct ratios in the rest of the woodland area.

- Actively teaching basic safety rules to the children e.g. the children will be taught not to put anything in their mouth that they find in the woodland including edible berries.
- Ensuring the First Aid box is accessible at all times
- Ensuring the nursery/ groups compile a list of all those using the woodland at any one time including the name of all staff and volunteers if appropriate.
- Lead staff member will have a mobile phone with them at all times, this will be switched on to enable a two-way flow of information between the office and group.

Behaviour in the Woodland

See Behaviour Policy. In addition:

- Adults must provide a positive role model at all times (i.e. not eating berries in the woodland, not showing fear of spiders and wearing appropriate clothing similar to the children)
- Adults and children must be taught the need to maintain safety at all times
- Children's care of the natural world and the woodland environment will be developed and extended.

Emergency Procedures

See Health and Safety policy and Emergency Plan.

- All participants will be briefed in what to do in case of emergency.
- The children are taught from their first experience that they follow the adult command, for example '1, 2, 3 come to me' – this is practiced each week.
- The group leader will assess the situation, the nature and extent of the injury/accident. They will ensure that the rest of the group are safe from danger and are adequately supervised. They will designate a person to attend to the casualty, giving first aid if necessary and take them indoors.
- The leader ensures that accident reports are completed in line with policy. An accident book will be available on site at all times. In an emergency the lead staff member will contact the office or call the emergency services directly. Procedures will be followed i.e. immediately informing a senior member of staff who will then manage the incident.

Missing Children

See Lost Child Policy

Toileting Policy

The leader ensures that all children have the opportunity to go to the toilet before going to the woodland. Due to the small area and the ecological impact, children must be taken indoors to the toilet and are not allowed to relieve themselves on site.

Philosophy of Forest School

The philosophy which underpins the Forest School movement is to encourage and inspire children, through mastery of small, achievable tasks in a woodland environment, to grow in confidence and independence so that they are able to develop a sense of self-worth. Children will acquire new skills as they are ready for them, so that activities can maintain a degree of challenge and excitement, whilst remaining safe and controlled. Experience in other settings has shown Forest School to be inspirational, opinion changing and challenging. It raises expectations and develops insights into individual learning styles and schemas. It is personally and socially uplifting so laying the foundations for other learning.

At Forest School:

- All children in the Nursery will be given the opportunity to participate in all activities regardless of age, ability or gender.
- All children will be respected and their individuality and potential recognised, valued and nurtured. Forest School activities and the use of Forest School equipment will offer children the opportunity to develop in an environment free from prejudice and discrimination.
- The Forest School programme will recognise the wide range of special needs of children and will consider what part it can play in meeting these needs.

- All children should be adequately dressed to ensure that they are able to take part in all Forest School activities; therefore the Forest School programme will supply all appropriate clothing (e.g. waterproofs, sun hats).

Use of Fire at Forest School/Woodland

Currently, there are no fires used at Forest School/Woodland.

Use of Tools

Using small hand tools is an important part of Forest School as it enables children to develop new, practical skills that help them develop self confidence.

Hand tools are to be maintained in good order by the Forest School Leader and will be inspected before each session to ensure safety. Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and to treat them with respect. Whilst using hand tools the staff to child ratio is increased. This will be achieved by following these guidelines:

- Tools will be kept in the Forest School tool box and only removed by the Forest School staff or volunteers.
- Children and adults will be taught how to handle tools properly and safe storage e.g. potato peelers
- Other tools will be used by Forest School staff or volunteers only
- Running with tools is prohibited
- Pointing with tools is prohibited
- Children will lose permission to use tools if the guidelines are not followed
- All tools will be used two arms and a tool length away from other people
- When using potato peelers to whittle, this must be done at the side of, and downwards of the body
- All tools must be counted back into the tool box at the end of the session

Evaluation

The leader is responsible for evaluating the impact of the activities on the children's development. All staff and volunteers are expected to complete brief observations after each session and to feedback any additional information or ideas to the leader.

Approved by the Governing Body: January 2023

To be reviewed by: January 2026

Relevant for:-

Family Centre: No	Nursery: Yes	Parents: Yes
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