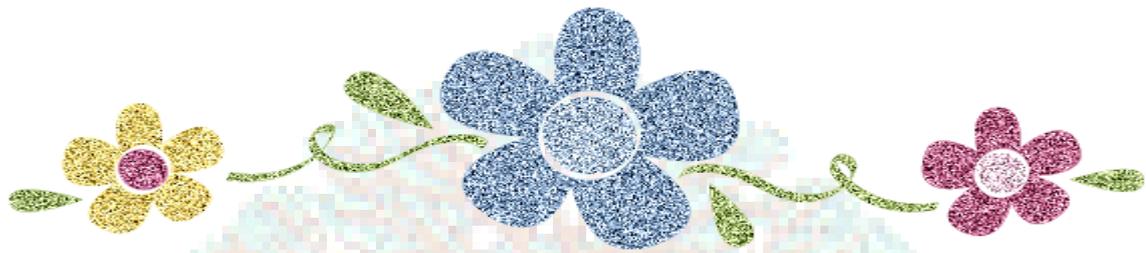


Lea Primary School



Forest School Handbook



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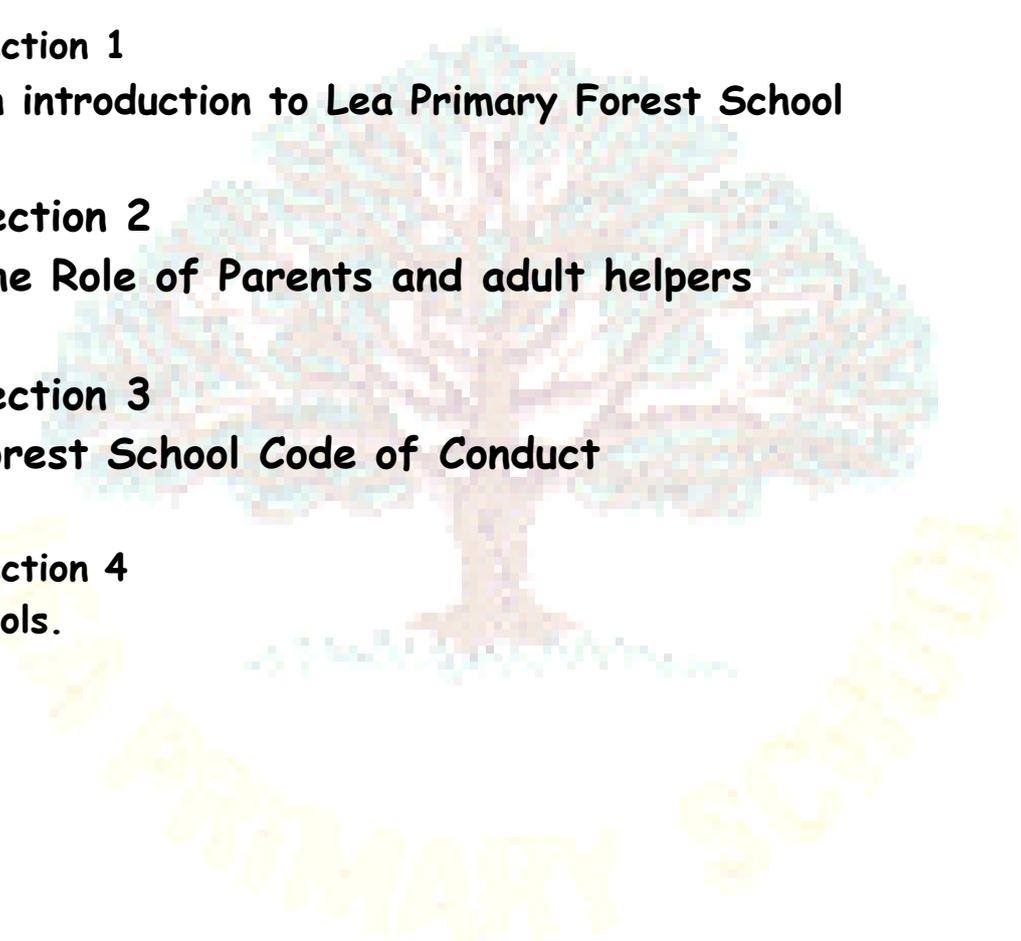
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Section 1

An introduction to Lea Primary Forest School

Lea Primary School initiated Forest school lessons and activities at the end of 2011.

The Forest School idea grew from staff's desire to provide a curriculum at Lea Primary School which reflected the naturally stunning area in which the school is situated but which, up to that point, barely featured in the curriculum.

Through Forest School and other environmentally-based initiatives, children attending Lea Primary School are able to develop a life long love and understanding of the natural environment, whilst developing the core purposes of the Forest School ethos, namely, development of self esteem, confidence and social skills. Through carefully planned activities, children from

the school take part in Forest School work which are designed to enable children to excel in all areas of their personal, academic and spiritual development.

The philosophy which underpins the Forest School movement is to encourage and inspire individuals and groups, through mastery of small, achievable tasks in a woodland environment and to grow in

confidence and independence, so that they are able to develop a sense of self-worth.

Children acquire new skills as they are ready for them so that activities maintain a degree of challenge and excitement, whilst remaining safe and controlled.

At Lea Primary School we operate our Forest School in our own woods adjacent to the school. The woods were cleared by parents, children, friends and staff in the spring and summer of 2011 allowing safe access to a superb area. Paths and steps have been installed and the memories of pupils from long ago plundered to regenerate the woods in keeping with information

gained from some of our well loved ex-pupils (especially Maureen Barnet and the authoress Alison Uttley).

The freedom of the 'forest' allows the children the opportunity to experience remoteness and a realistic experience in which they are able to practise their skills and further develop their understanding of a woodland environment.

Experience in other settings, both in Britain and abroad, 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. Unlike other forms of outdoor education which generally concentrate on team-building, challenging activities or competitiveness, the Forest School embraces an entirely different approach through the nurturing, support and development of the self-esteem of participants.

Section 2

The Role of Parents and adult helpers in school.

The role of parents and adult helpers is very important in our school. We wish to make it clear that our school is open to parents and adult helpers and that they feel they can offer something to the children. Organising parents in the classroom and being clear about their role and work will benefit the children and give all adults a clear sense of purpose and direction.

Forest School Volunteers

Whilst the role of a Forest School Volunteer Ranger (FSVR) and their use to support learning shares all of the points covered above, the school recognises that responsibilities placed on FSVRs in the outdoor environment are often more rigorous than might be found at other times.

It is important that FSVRs are encouraged not to be passive but that they have a responsibility, under the guidance and direction of the Forest School Leader, to ensure procedures and lessons are followed. They should be reassured that ultimate responsibility rests with the Forest School Leader but that by becoming a FSVR, there will be there to contribute actively in the well being and safety of the group.

General guidelines for parents

All parents should sign in at the office upon arrival before going into class. Please get a Visitor Badge and state which class they will be working.

Parents need to work with groups of children rather than one to one and should seek the teacher's advice regarding anything that needs clarifying.

Section 3

Forest School Code of Conduct

Boundaries

Children are always made aware of how far they can explore before a session begins. If children explore hidden areas, an adult should also go into the cover, deep enough to be able to see the children. If you do lose sight of them, shout '1, 2, 3, where are you?' The child should reply '1, 2, 3 I'm here'. This has been introduced to them through a game and practised many times.

Picking up and playing with stones

Art, design and playing with stones and even 'gentle' throwing are fine but make sure children are thinking of others and don't throw them with force at ANYTHING.

Picking up and playing with sticks

Children can carry sticks but make sure they think about how close they are to other children. Longer sticks can be dragged or carried with a child at both ends or using team work. Sticks must not be thrown, nor should children be allowed to pull them from living trees.

Tree climbing

Children should only climb trees as part of the activities discussed with the teacher. The child(ren) must make it clear that they intend to climb the tree and Make it clear to the teacher which tree will be climbed. The teacher must be told how high the child will climb (this may not exceed 3 times the height of the child). The teacher will assess both the tree and floor area for safety. The teacher will look for any other risks

and only allow the child to climb the tree if satisfied that it is reasonable to do so.

Rope and string use

Ropes, strings and other lashing materials will be made available for day to day activities in the woods. Correct knots will be taught along with their uses. The materials used will be removed from the woods when not needed.

Prevent tying up other children or themselves!

If a child has a good idea and wants, for example, to try to build a rope swing do help them and use the chance to model appropriate knot tying.

Carrying & transporting materials

The children should be encouraged to roll, lift, drag and pull materials, either by hand or using ropes. The safe way to lift, by bending your knees and keeping a straight back should be modelled by all adults. Heavier objects can be rolled, dragged or carried by more people. Our woods are sloped and risks to them selves or to others will be taught and discussed before activities involving moving of larger materials.

Digging

Children love digging and this is fine in the designated area in our school grounds. In the woods, however, making holes in the ground is to be discouraged. Children will be shown how to look carefully for creatures in their habitats using appropriate tools (including lolly sticks) and fingers.

Toileting

Children are always invited to use the toilets before we leave the School. If necessary, boys may 'go' behind bushes beyond boundaries with an adult supervising. Girls may too if they are

comfortable doing so. School toilets are close enough for children to be taken to by a responsible adult if the child is young or to go to themselves if old enough.

Eating and drinking

Prevent children eating anything found in woods, such as berries or seeds, unless the plants are known and this is part of the experience.

Around the fire or log circle.

There must be no running within the fire area and anything being carried must be placed on the ground behind the seating. We then step over the logs to sit down. We will always practise this as if a real fire were being lit

Leaving the site

The woods must always be left as it was found. If artefacts are made using 'found' materials these may be taken off site. Shelters should normally be demolished and imported materials taken back to school at the end of each session. Occasionally some large items may be left tidily for the next group.

2. Using and storing tools; General notes.

Tools are all counted in and out and are kept in suitable containers in one designated spot.

Tools are given out for a purpose and all adults should model their correct use, storage and transportation at all times.

Tools are used well away from other active children and only walking is permitted when carrying them.

Section 4

Tools.

Storage

When not in use all tools are kept in the cupboard under the stage.

Tools should be cleaned before they are put away.

The procedures for teaching and using tools are kept with the 'Tool Talk' notes.

Equipment

In addition to tools suited to the planned activities the Forest School leader will always take out an **emergency bag**. The contents of the **emergency bag** will vary depending on the site location being used, the group leading and the time of year and weather conditions. Contents of the bag may also vary as a result of risk assessments. However, there are some essential items that should be carried on every session.

Essential Items:

- First Aid Kit
- Emergency procedures
- Medical information and emergency contact details of all in group (including adult helpers and leaders of sessions)
- Risk assessments
- Means of communication (mobile phone or radio - checked in working order and that receives signal)
- Clean water
- Emergency whistle
- Emergency bivi bag
- Accident sheets

Lea Primary Forest School Permission Form

Name of Child _____ Class 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. (circle)

I agree to my child taking part in Forest School activities.
I understand that my child will, at an appropriate level, have opportunities to work with hand tools and small fires through the course of their Forest School work.

Medical Information

I confirm that the medical information I have supplied to the school is up-to date.

As an additional precaution, we are required to ask you in more detail about allergies and insect stings. Please tick the appropriate box(es):

- My child has never been stung by a wasp/bee
- My child has been stung by a wasp/bee and made a normal recovery
- My child has been stung by a wasp/bee and had an allergic reaction

If you ticked the final box, we will get in touch with you to get further information.

My child has the following food allergy/allergies:

Signed _____ Parent/ Carer

Name of Parent/Carer (print) _____

Date _____