

## OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

When talking with the children please use positive language that encourages conversation and thought. If, for example a child asks “What flower is this?” a closed answer would be “A daisy”. An open answer would be “Does it remind you of anything? If you could give it a name what would it be?” Can you have a conversation about the flower in which the child can use language and imagination and of course at some point during the conversation you can also let them know the name of the flower!

## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Some children may find it difficult to relax into playing in the woods and many have difficulty in actually being allowed to get dirty!

It is vital to be a good role model, talk about what we are doing and feelings that we may have. Let the children lead you, it gives them a huge emotional boost to feel like they are the expert and that they are helping you.

Gently encourage children who are hesitant about joining in but be sensitive to their mood and the way that they are feeling.

## AS A VOLUNTEER HELPER WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW/

We have Forest School so that our children will learn;

- To love and respect nature
- To be adventurous and confident
- To recognise and understand their own emotions
- To manage their own learning

**The children learn though play, it is therefore important, that you are;**

- Encourage participation
- Are playful
- Allow children to lead you so that activities are child led
- Allow children to repeat activities
- Ensure that the children feel safe
- Allow the children to get muddy and dirty
- Allow the children to be alone if they wish to be (keep a safe eye on them from a distance)
- Allow safe risk taking

## REFLECTION

At the end of the session, please take time to record any observations or speak to our Forest School Leader or Assistant. Your input is invaluable in helping us make sure that every child gets as much out of Forest School as they possibly can.

## FOREST SCHOOL VOLUNTEER HELPER'S GUIDE

### Pot Kiln Primary School

Thank you for volunteering to help at Forest School, we hope that you get as much out of it as the children.

This guide is to give you a bit more insight into “Forest School” and keeping the children and yourself safe in the woods.

In order to volunteer you will be required to hold a current DBS check which can easily be arranged through Mrs. Jordan the school Business Manager. In order for us to plan and run successful sessions we would need volunteers to commit to attending on a regular basis.

Clara Lucchesi will be running the Forest School sessions and she is a trained Level 3 Forest School Leader and holds a First Aid Qualification. She will be assisted by Jill Norris .

Our Forest School sessions are treated as any other school visit. This means that we comply with the safety regulations and guidelines that are set down by Suffolk County Council covering educational visits and outdoor play. In accordance with the Health and Safety Act (1974) the school will take all possible steps to ensure your health and safety whilst in the woods.

You will need to ensure that as a helper you **read, sign and date all risk assessments** which have been prepared by the Forest School Leader before the sessions and that you are aware of our emergency procedures

## THE LOG CIRCLE AND FIREPIT

We do not walk inside or across the log circle at anytime we always go round the outside.

This is taught right from the beginning when our Forest Schoolers were PK Wolves and so by the time they get to Forest School this behaviour is an automatic action.

The only time that the children are allowed Inside the log circle will be when they are fire striking as an activity or when they are cooking on the fire. In both of these circumstances the child must be seated on a log and be invited by an adult to do so.

This practice also ensures that when we are using tools in the log circle we keep a clear working area for everyone (our blood bubble!).

## TOOL USE

The Forest School Leader will demonstrate safe use of tools (there are 'tool use cards' in the Forest School bag if you need a reminder).

We always walk with tools pointed away and down from your body.

Children sit in the log circle at least an arms width apart (blood bubble!) from each other.

Always wear a protective glove on your non-working hand.

When finished, please secure /lock your tool and return it to the tool bag.

## SAFE RISK TAKING

To enable the children to grow into responsible, confident adults they need to learn how to judge risk.

Children are allowed to get dirty, use sharp tools, climb trees and so on. These activities are hazardous but we manage these hazards so that the risks taken by the children are acceptable.

By taking risks at Forest School, children will learn valuable lessons and will be more equipped to judge risks for themselves as they grow older and become less dependent on adults.

As helpers you need to read and follow the risk assessments and use your common sense to prevent possible accidents.

Use positive language to encourage forward thinking for example " Can you find a good strong branch to climb to next? " instead of vague language such as "be careful".

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

You will be given a copy of our Emergency procedure before our session.

There will also be a copy in our First Aid bags, and in our Forest School bag along with a mobile phone and our risk assessments.

## RESPECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Remind the children that we respect nature as well as each other. We do not snap off branches or disturb habitats.

## TREE CLIMBING & DEN BUILDING

Children need to make an adult fully aware that they want to climb a tree (they may need reminding of this from time to time!). They are allowed to climb no higher than their adults head. (This is so that if they get into difficulty they are still in the adults reach).

Large branches are to be carried by two children at either end or they can be dragged. Show them how to check that their den is safe to use.

## STAYING WITHIN THE SITE

The site is fully secured by a fence and coded gate so that the children are in a safe secure environment without the feeling of being too enclosed.

## HYGIENE

Please make sure that the children do not eat, lick or pick anything that they find in the woods (even if you know its safe to do so). The children wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet facilities. Staff members only to accompany children to the toilet (unless it is your own child).