

Combs Ford Primary Forest School – Information for Families

What is Forest School?

Forest school is an exciting opportunity for children to experience nature and to learn outdoors. At Forest School the children learn from first-hand experience and develop and strengthen the seven learning behaviours that are described in our Rainbow Values and Rules:

- **Respect:** I speak and act kindly towards others.
- **Compassion:** I understand how others feel.
- **Self-Awareness:** I understand how I feel and how I make others feel.
- **Self-Belief:** I believe that I can be the best I can be.
- **Critical Thinking:** I solve problems and make good choices.
- **Teamwork:** I work well with other people.
- **Resilience:** I don't give up when things get difficult.

Forest School also helps children to develop their communication skills (especially speaking and listening), social skills, inquisitiveness, independence, perseverance, knowledge of nature, responsibility, fine and gross motor skills, practical skills, and the everyday application of their English and Maths skills.

Where is Forest School?

Our Forest School takes place in our pocket woodland on our school site. Children often find this space calming and enjoy how it changes subtly with every visit, with the weather, and with the seasons. Our children create a connection with the natural environment and learn about local flora and fauna. They monitor their ecological impact and manage the school's outdoor environment sustainably.

When Does Forest School Happen?

To make sure that all our children experience regular Forest School sessions, each class will have six fortnightly Forest School sessions over a twelve week period. Over their time at school, the children will experience the woodland during all four meteorological seasons. Years 3 and 4 have their Forest School Session during Autumn and Winter, Years 5 and 6 have their Forest School Session during Winter and Spring, and Years 1 and 2 have their Forest School Session during Spring and Summer.

What Happens at Forest School?

Forest School sessions are defined by the group, the woodland and the weather. The sessions last about 2 hours. Children will gather around the fire circle and may light a fire. They will play games, have the opportunity to learn new skills (using hand tools, learning about ropes and knots, campfire cooking, using natural materials to make crafts, make dens and put up shelters, and even climb trees), and learn about nature as they watch the woodland change with the seasons. There is always a safety talk at the start of each session and the Forest School Leader will only introduce new skills when the children are ready to learn them.

What Should Children Wear?

At Forest School we always say that, *"there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing"*. This is our recommended Forest School clothing list:

- Long sleeved top
- Full length trousers (or zip-off trousers) or warm leggings – in all seasons
- Long sleeved fleece or jumper
- Warm Socks (and a spare pair)
- Closed-toed shoes – no sandals
- Warm boots – wellies can be very cold
- Waterproof coat with a hood
- Waterproof trousers
- Gloves, scarves and a woolly hat
- Sun hat
- In winter – layers (including socks)



How Do We Keep Children Safe?

Miss Day, our Headteacher, is the school's Forest School Leader – she is a qualified Level 3 Forest School Leader (she trained with Suffolk Wildlife Trust), and has a Level 3 Outdoor and Paediatric First Aid qualification. The school woodland has been carefully assessed and Miss Day always carries out a *Weather Check* and a *Daily Site Safety Sweep* before every Forest School session. There is always an adult to child ratio of at least 1:8 with additional adult support provided where appropriate for children with additional needs.

Part of Forest School is teaching children about risks and how to evaluate them so the children will be taught how to build and light fires, how to cook and make over a fire, how to use tools, how to tie and use ropes and knots, how to make dens and put up shelters, and how to identify plants and animals. All these activities are introduced when, and only when, the children are ready and they will be given detailed training in all of them.

By allowing children to take measured risks we help prepare them for future choices and teach them to be actively responsible for themselves, their choices, and their actions. Research shows that Forest School can contribute greatly to children's wellbeing which is a major factor in academic success.

Every activity has a code of practice and is risk assessed.

What Are the Session Dates for My Child?

These are detailed overleaf.

Session Dates: Year #	Session Dates: Year #