

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 could be “ Does it remind you of anything? What would you call it if you were going to name it?” You can then have a conversation about the flower in which the child can use language and imagination (use one of our jeweller loupes to look closer)

Of course, during the conversation you can let them know the name.

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

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

It is vital to be a good role model, talk about what you are doing and how it is making you feel. Let the children teach you, it gives them a huge emotional boost to feel like an expert.

Gently encourage children who are hesitant about joining in but be sensitive to their moods.

REFLECTION

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

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 through play. It is important, therefore, that you:

- Are playful yourself
- Encourage participation
- Allow children to lead you and let them be in control
- Allow children to repeat activities
- Ensure they feel safe
- Allow them to get muddy and dirty
- Allow the children to be alone if they wish to be
- Allow safe risk taking

Thank you for volunteering

Your help will give the children the opportunity to run free, jump, climb, get muddy and explore whilst being safe.

Please talk to Alicia, Heather or Michelle if there is anything that you are unsure of.

FOREST SCHOOL VOLUNTEER HELPER'S GUIDE

St John the Baptist CE VA Primary School,
Pebmarsh

Thank you for volunteering to help at Forest School, we hope you get as much out of it as the children. This guide is to give you a bit more of an insight into “Forest School” and keeping yourself and the children safe in the woods. In order to volunteer you be required to hold a current DBS check which the school can arrange. In order for us to plan and run successful sessions we would need volunteers to commit to attending on a regular basis. Alicia Watkins, Heather Thomas and Michelle Seeney will be running Forest sessions and all hold Level 3 Forest School leader and First Aid qualification..

Our forest School sessions are treated as any other school visit. This means that we comply with all the safety regulations and guidelines that are set down by Essex 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 in the woods.

You need to ensure that , as a helper, you **read, sign and date all risk assessments** which have been prepared by the Forest School leaders before our session and are aware of our emergency procedures. If you are transporting children in your car , please pass on a copy of your driving licence and insurance to one of the leaders.

THE LOG CIRCLE AND FIREPIT

We do not walk inside or across the log circle at any time *“Pebmarsh Pigeons go round the outside”*

When they arrive or leave the log circle they step over a log to sit on it .

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

This practice also ensures that that when we are using tools in the log circle we keep a clear working area for everyone.

TOOL USE

One of the leaders will demonstrate safe use of tools (there are “tool use cards” in our Forest School bag if you need to be reminded).

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

Children sit in the log circle at least an arms length from each other.

Always wear a protective glove on your non working hand.

When finished, please return the tool to the tool box or bag.

SAFE RISK TAKING

To enable 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 able 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 and try not to use 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 Red Rucksack and also in our Forest School bag which also contains a mobile phone and our Risk Assessments.

TREE CLIMBING & DEN BUILDING

Children should make an adult aware that they want to climb a tree (they may need reminding) They are allowed to climb no higher than their head. Please stay close enough to keep an eye on them without them being aware of you.

Large branches to be carried by 2 children at either end or can be dragged. Show them how to check that their den is safe for them to use

STAYING WITHIN THE SITE

The boundaries are marked by Red triangles — children are reminded that they should not go beyond these.

HYGIENE

Please make sure the children do not eat anything they find in the woods (even if you know it is safe to do so)

The children wash their hands before snack time and after using our toilet facilities. **Staff members only to accompany children to the toilet** (unless it is your own child)

RESPECT

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