



# **WildTime NatureSchool**

**Handbook for Parents & Carers**



### Timings & Structure of Day

Each day begins from 9am. Parents should park in the main car park and escort their children up to Fieldside (one of the site buildings). Fieldside acts as our base throughout the day, spare clothing and lunch can be left in the building until needed. The day begins as soon as they walk through the door, with a range of nature and environmentally aware games and activities for them to enjoy though many children prefer to spend the first half hour reconnecting with their friends on the field. Once the group is assembled we head into the woods. Led activities are interspersed with opportunities for children to have independence and freedom to do what they want. While no child ever has to do any activity it is usually the case that the children choose to join in. Depending on the activity and the subject matter the group may be split into smaller groups to optimise the experience. Typically the activities will relate to particular aspects of the **Science, Geography or History curriculum** though we are not limited to these areas. The session usually includes investigations in and around the natural environment your child will be immersed in.

Lunch time will generally run from 12.30-1.30pm and takes place in Fieldside. The warm building will give children the chance to warm up and recharge on the cold days. Lunch time is a sociable affair as the children sit together doing as much chatting as eating!

In the afternoon session the children may have a more **traditional tool-based Forest School** session. This includes woodcraft projects and developing tool use skills as well as a range of other adventures in the woods and opportunities for learning in the woods.

Once the afternoon session has ended we will return to Fieldside where you will be able to collect your child. Pick up is at 3.30pm.

The above structure is an example of what a typical day might look like but all the aspects are interchangeable depending on the plan for the day and how the children are responding to the activities.

Each half term has an over-arching theme which relates to the natural world in some way. Examples of previous half term themes are *Native Animals & Beyond*, *Exploring & Mapping Skills*, *Sustainability*, *Trees & Woods*, *Forces in Nature*, and *Art in Nature*. While extensive

planning and preparation is carried out for each session we respond to the needs of the children and, as such, no WildTime plan is ever delivered exactly as prepared.

**Key Points:**

- Drop-off - 9-9.30am
- Meeting point – Fieldside
- Pick-up – 3.30pm

**Costs**

Typically each half-term runs for 6 weeks during school term times. When longer school half terms occur we may have a one week break mid-term. Dates for 2019-20 academic year can be found on our website. The total payable for the half-term is due at the point of registration. The cost for each day at WildTime NatureSchool is £55. We cannot provide a refund within three weeks of the start of the first session paid for. We are unable to provide an option to transfer sessions due to absence.

Places are confirmed upon receipt of your registration form and payment. After week three of each half-term you will be given first option to sign-up for the following half-term before places are advertised.

**Clothing Policy**

Spending the day in the outdoors can be uplifting, absorbing and wondrous but it can also be disheartening if your child is not prepared with the right clothing. Your child should come to WildTime dressed so they are warm in the outdoors. It is best to have several layers so we can remove a layer where we need to rather than rely on one warm coat and a t-shirt. The child should also have a waterproof outer layer in case the weather is wet. Children need to wear wellington boots or other protective outdoor boots. In addition, your child will need to have a hat and gloves. Lastly, each child should bring a spare outfit, including shoes (can be trainers) – though no extra outer coat is required.

While at WildTime we adhere to the motto: *There is no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing!* – we will seek out shelter in the worst of the weather and in any other circumstances that require it.

**Key Points:**

- Layered warm clothing
- Wellies or boots
- Spare clothes (including shoes)
- Waterproof outer wear

When we have warmer weather the children should still have trousers and long-sleeved t-shirts to provide some protection from stinging nettles and sunburn.

### **Food and Drink Policy**

You are expected to provide your child with a packed lunch and any additional snacks you think your child may need. Water is available on site but children should bring a bottle with them. It is the parents' responsibility to alert WildTime Education to any dietary issues. Cutlery is available for the children should they need it. Children are asked not to share food as we have a range of dietary requirements to consider. In the event that a child has a pre-existing severe allergy to a particular food all parents may be alerted in order that they not use that ingredient in the preparation of their child's lunch. For further information please see our Allergy Policy.

### **Settling in Policy**

We understand how important it is to parents and children alike that the children feel comfortable, safe and secure at WildTime and for this reason we ultimately take our lead from you and your child. Our Settling In procedure allows for a gentle introduction to our NatureSchool provision for those children that require this but exists as guidance only.

- Children can be accompanied by an adult during the first session (and beyond if necessary).
- An adult can join their child at lunch times.
- At lunchtimes children can call parents and parents can call children (12-1pm) for a quick reconnection.
- The session leader will have a mobile phone on their person at all times in case there is an immediate need for contact.

It should be noted that traditional Forest School is best engaged with when parents are not present.

### **Medical Policy**

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to alert WildTime Education to any allergies, intolerances or other medical issues and provide any associated medication. Staff are trained in Paediatric First Aid and have full first aid kits located throughout the site.

### **Pick Up Procedure**

Upon registration you are required to submit names of adults who are likely to be picking up your child. You can also alert us to any changes on the day by contacting Dominic on 07771527464, this can be a text. Your child will not be allowed to leave with anyone without consent being given by the parent first.

### **Anti-Bullying & Conflict Transformation Policy**

## MISSION STATEMENT

*WildTime* is committed to working with children, staff, parents and carers to create a safe environment where bullying or persistent conflict is not accepted and allowed to exist. We employ a range of strategies to help children manage their relationships with those around them.

## DEFINITIONS

**We follow the NSPCC definition of bullying: 'Something that is carried out to hurt someone's body or emotions, on purpose, over and over again'.**

**Conflict transformation may be defined as a gradual reforming of a relationship requiring continued engagement and interaction. It also incorporates conflict prevention and conflict resolution but aims to address the structural roots causing the conflict.**

## STRATEGIES

Each child should feel **Valued, Included and Protected (VIPs)** at *WildTime*. If conflicts/issues arise resulting in the loss of VIP status we adhere to two approaches. One or the other may be appropriate depending on the circumstance. Both approaches are outlined below:

### **Counselling/mediation between the bully and victim**

The pupils involved are encouraged to talk issues over with the aid of a mediator and find a way forward to end the cycle of bullying and complaints. This seems to be more effective when pupils who are friends fall out, but could be less effective at resolving bullying or other conflicts.

Although mediation can be successful in some cases, it is also the case that the victim may feel intimidated and therefore be unwilling to enter into discourse which makes them feel vulnerable when discussing their feelings. When using this method, it is important to carry out follow-up work and ensure positive behaviour continues after the sessions end.

### **The no-blame or support group method**

In this method, the victim is interviewed and asked to describe what has happened. Dominic, Kerri or Anna-W will then hold a meeting with a group of students including the perpetrator, those who may have seen the incidents and others who are not directly involved. The Leader explains to the group how the victim is feeling and the group then offers suggestions to find a solution.

Removing blame from the process allows the perpetrators to involve themselves in finding a solution without feeling threatened or defensive. Those who were bystanders are given a chance to see that what they observed was not appropriate and also benefit from this process.

The group is encouraged to come up with practical problem-solving solutions and is charged with carrying out ideas deemed to be appropriate.

Some of the proposed solutions will then be carried out. In the event that a child is unable to participate in a given activity (E.G.: a child has been violent so may not be allowed to use knives within a subsequent activity), the child who has been excluded from activities may now have someone to play with. Additionally, if appropriate, either child involved in a conflict may be accompanied by a 'guardian' to support them and help the children avoid further conflict.

With this approach it is important that the Leader/s discuss progress and what has been achieved in the following weeks.

**Separation** - In addition to the above, it will sometimes be necessary to separate the children in conflict by organising groups and activities and adult support in order that they can have space from each other.

**Excessive force** - If, during conflict, a child uses 'excessive force' it must be pointed out to the child that there is no circumstance where that level of force is appropriate. They will be reminded of *WildTime's* responsibility to ensure that all children, including them, are valued, included and protected (as per the Contract) and that if a child prevents another child from being afforded these rights it may be necessary for them to take a break from *WildTime*.

When incidents occur whereby a child is known to be physically or emotionally harmed it is our duty to inform the parents of the children involved.

### **Tool Use Policy**

All tools are used under the supervision of an adult trained in the use of the tool.

As a trained Forest School Practitioner, the Forest School Leader has received instruction on the use of all tools.

Tools that the children may have an opportunity to use:

1. Bowsaw (12" & 24") and hacksaws
2. Potato peelers aka 'whittlers'
3. Tent pegs aka 'pokey-thingies'
4. Mallet & lump hammer
5. Hand drill, brace & bit drill, power drill
6. Billhooks
7. Hatchets
8. Penknives/pocket knives/wood carving knives
9. Junior hacksaws

#### **1. Bowsaw**

The use of the 12 inch bowsaw will be as follows. The ratio of adults to children in the use of this tool is initially 1 to 1. The adult will kneel on one side of the bowsaw and the child will kneel on the other side. The child's non-sawing arm will remain behind his/her

back. The adult will make a guide sawing mark in the wood, then invite the child to grasp the bowsaw with their sawing arm. The child is required to hold onto the bowsaw handle and loosen upper arm. The Forest School Leader will check that all parties are ready and perform the sawing action themselves. The child is taught to saw at a slow and steady rate (not a race) along the full length of the blade and focus on the horizontal movement allowing gravity to drop the blade down. By these means the child is learning to use the tool without putting themselves in any danger of injury. Once proficiency and trust is established the Forest School Leader may allow two children to saw together under supervision.

2. Potato Peelers

The initial ratio of adults to children in the use of the potato peelers is 1 to 1. When it is felt that the child's use of the tool is proficient they will be allowed to use the tool under supervision with a ratio of up to 1 to 6.

The potato peelers will be used to scrape (away from the body) the bark from sticks.

3. Tent pegs

The initial ratio of adults to children in the use of this tool is 1 to 1. The tool is used to push the soft pith from the centre of elder sticks. The children will be shown how to use the tool and after they have shown an understanding of its use they will be permitted to use it independently with an adult present to supervise.

4. Mallet and lump hammer

The initial ratio of adults to children in the use of this tool is 1 to 1. The children will be shown how to use the tool and after they have shown an understanding of its safe use (i.e. free hand clear of object about to be struck) they will be permitted to use it independently with an adult present to supervise.

5. Hand drill, brace & bit drill, power drill

The initial ratio of adults to children in the use of this tool is 1 to 1. The children will be shown how to use the tool and after they have shown an understanding of its safe use they will be permitted to use it independently with an adult present to supervise.

6. Billhooks

The initial ratio of adults to children in the use of the potato peelers is 1 to 1. When it is felt that the child's use of the tool is proficient they will be allowed to use the tool under supervision with a ratio of up to 1 to 6. Billhooks will typically be used in conjunction with a mallet or lump hammer to prepare fire wood.

7. Hatchet

The ratio of adults to children in the use of this tool is 1 to 1.

8. Penknives/pocket knives/wood carving knives

The ratio of adults to children in the use of this tool is 1 to 1. Children will not be permitted to use their own knives but instead use those provided. Children must show capable use of potato peelers first. Each child must be shown how to slice away bark away from danger triangle (between legs). All children must be sitting with 1 metre clearance

all around them while using knives. No child will be given a knife until they have shown complete understanding of the whittling action away from the body and a perfect recall of the safety measures needed when using the knife. All knives to be stored in the in a secure area.

### **Education Leader Profile**

The day is led by Dominic Miles. He has a breadth of knowledge and experience which includes teaching, working with children, learning in nature, and parenting, which means you are leaving your child in capable hands.

Dominic spent 10 years as a teacher in the state education system. It was here that Dominic realised that the incumbent approach to education failed to meet every child's needs, leaving little space for nurturing gifts and talents that lay outside the narrow band of subjects prioritised in schools. Running parallel to this he began to develop a 'wild' outdoor learning environment to encourage all children to get out of the classroom. This included developing and teaching high-quality schemes of learning relating to aspects of the Science, Geography, History and PSHE curriculums, the delivery of which was deemed to be outstanding when judged against Ofsted's teaching standards. These sessions proved to be of particular benefit to those children who struggled within the confines of the conventional classroom. They were given the space and trust to learn away from books, screens and glare of an overworked, under-appreciated and, ultimately, under-motivated teacher. In these sessions the new central pillars of learning were interdependence and discovery.

The next step was to become a Forest School Leader and find a way to operate within the school system. As it turned out the skills required for high level traditional Forest School provision run counter to the skills traditionally thought to be necessary to be a class teacher – it is very difficult to have a child-led and built-to-succeed ethos in an environment where competition is covertly engrained and winners and losers the order of the day. While barriers to success existed, those who attended Forest School (sometimes chosen just to get them out of the classroom) ended up making at least expected progress in the prioritised subject areas despite missing more lessons than their peers and being thought of (and sometimes spoken of) as 'academically dead'. Forest School taught these children skills and knowledge of tools, woodcraft and nature but the real gift of traditional Forest School is the improvements in self-esteem it delivered. These children were able to return to the mainstream classroom – their temples to failure - and access the learning thanks to improvements in confidence and the rejuvenating effects of being in natural environments.

Dominic has two children. With his wife, they home-educate their son Noah. His daughter, Robyn, loves attending his nursery age woodland sessions each week.

### **Other Important Information**

WildTime Education has Public Liability coverage up to £5,000,000. All session leaders are fully DBS checked. Forest School-style sessions are led by a trained and experienced Level 3 Forest School Leader. Workshops are delivered by qualified and experienced teachers with specialism in outdoor education. A paediatric first aider is always present on site in the event medical intervention is required.



# **All Day WildTime**

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