



WildTime PlayGroup

Welcome Pack



## **WildTime PlayGroup Parent & Carer Handbook 2019-20**

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### **Welcome to WildTime PlayGroup**

When you join WildTime PlayGroup you are joining a community of people who share a love and passion for the outdoors and the experiences and fun it provides. Both adults and children work together to create a stimulating, happy and exciting learning environment that offers an alternative to more mainstream childcare provisions.

We follow the Early Learning Goals as set out in the Early Years Foundation stage, as required by Ofsted, but we recognise above all else the importance of self-esteem, effective communication and secure attachments. As we currently offer provision only two days a week we acknowledge that the majority of our children's early years input will be received elsewhere.

WildTime PlayGroup runs alongside WildTime NatureSchool (catering for 6-11 year olds) for 36 weeks a year, largely running in line with school term times, and provides care for 3-5 year olds.

Sessions take place 2 days a week - Wednesday and Thursday - running from 9.30am - 3.30pm.

Children can attend all day (9.30-3.30) or just for a morning session (9.30-12.30)

**Staff:**

On a typical day the adults will include

Kerri Clover (BA hons Primary school education, CACHE level 3 Early Years)

Debbie Herald (Forest School Practitioner)

Emma Cooper (BA Hons Primary School Education, QTS specialising in Early Years and KS1)

The WildTime team leader, Dominic Miles, is on site and contributes to both playgroup and WildTime NatureSchool activities.

All members of the WildTime team have Enhanced Disclosure and Barring (DBS) checks and are experienced in working with children.

Staff are trained in early years childcare/teaching and /or Forest School, and at least one team member present is qualified in Paediatric First Aid.

We aim to operate on a ratio of 1 adult: 5 children (this is higher than the statutory requirement).

**Starting WildTime PlayGroup**

We want your child to feel happy and safe with us. Some children settle quickly, others require more time. We will work with you to decide how best to settle your child - there are no expectations or rules about this. Staff will be guided by and support you with this. We are happy to listen to your views and ideas and to answer any questions.

For more information please see our Settling-in and Transition Policy (available with all other policies on our website [www.WildTime.org.uk](http://www.WildTime.org.uk)).

## **Key Person**

As we are a small preschool, all the adults will be part of your child's experience, however your child will be assigned a member of staff as their 'key person'. You will be introduced to your child's key person; they will be responsible for record keeping and sharing information with you about your child's learning, also supporting any concerns you may have or specific needs as they arise. Your child's Key Person will be allocated after a settling in period. (Key person policy available on request)

## **Learning and Development**

Please see our *Learning and Development Policy* at the end of this Welcome Pack and also available on our website ([www.WildTime.org.uk](http://www.WildTime.org.uk)).

## **Assessment**

All our assessments are carried out through observation and discussion; they are non-obtrusive, informal and on-going. We use this assessment to document your child's progress, identify next steps to move the learning on and to help us plan further learning opportunities. We share this information with you electronically using a secure software application to form a digital Learning Journal. We also ask you to contribute to this by sharing information about what your child enjoys doing at home – this helps form the bigger picture of your child's learning experience. You will receive more information on this once the registration process is complete.

## **A Typical Day**

Please note – every day is different and we love the ability to be spontaneous and flexible, so expect some changes from the stated schedule regularly.

We start the day at **9.30 am** with a soft start, allowing children to arrive between 9.30 and 10am. Children arrive to Earth house and find their named peg, storing their belongings and provisions for the day appropriately. They self register by adding their 'leaf' to the WildTime family tree.

Earth house is set up each morning to support a chosen theme, free play and socialisation. Parents are invited to talk about their child's needs with their key person and settle their children in to their surroundings.

**10-11am** - Child led activities in our Early Years woodland area 'The Nest@'.

Children utilise the learning opportunities set up for them, invitations to play focussed around a set theme are set up by the adults and children choose what they spend their time doing.

Adults scaffold learning, planning in the moment and observing children, engaging and

playing when children invite them to. Learning is extended by meaningful conversation that includes the introduction and expansion of key concepts and vocabulary. Key workers use this time to 'check in' with their children and gauge their emotional needs and interests for the session.

A healthy snack is available during this time for the children to eat if they would like. This is always fruit or vegetable based. There is a station set up with hand washing bowl and towel, jugs of water, cups, snack choices and the tools needed to prepare the snack e.g a vegetable peeler.

Children prepare and eat the snack as/when they want it.

**12pm** – We stop for lunch. Lunch is a social time and we all sit together to enjoy our food and converse.

**12.30pm** - Children that attend only the morning session are picked up by parents/carers from Earth House

During this time one adult will be tasked with the safe dismissal of morning only children and the remaining adults will supervise and assist the all day children with an activity that promotes a period of calm after eating.

**The afternoon session continues with adult led activities linked to the theme and child led activities both in Earth House and in the woodland area.**

Snacks are available throughout the afternoon session.

**3.00pm** – We come together as a group and reflect on the day, share stories and conversation and prepare ourselves for the end of the session.

**3.30pm** – Parents/carers arrive to collect children from Earth House.

### **Parental Involvement**

There are many ways in which you can participate in your child's learning at WildTime PlayGroup including -

- sharing knowledge of your child's needs, activities and interests with staff through discussion or via the digital Learning Journal;
- talking to your child about their day, what they have done or what they have enjoyed;
- encouraging your child to become more independent at home, provide opportunity for them to practice dressing themselves for example;
- sharing your own interests with the children;
- ensuring your child is dressed appropriately (see kit list within this pack).

## **Fees**

There is a registration fee of £120 which includes a Wild Time t shirt, online access to the Digital Learning Journal and administrative costs. £100 of this is fully refundable at such time as you and your child decide to stop attending WildTime PlayGroup as long as 2 weeks notice is given prior to the start of a new half term.

We charge £60 per day/£37.50 per half day; fees are charged half termly via our invoicing system.

Fees must still be paid if children are absent for a short period of time including holiday and illness. If your child is likely to be absent for a long period of time, please talk to Kerri or Dominic.

## **Clothing**

We provide a Wild Time t-shirt as part of the registration fee, which children can wear to WildTime PlayGroup if they choose. Additional t shirts and hooded sweaters can be purchased from WildTime if desired.

Children must be dressed appropriately for the weather and have at least one change of clothes with them in a backpack or holdall. Children who do not have appropriate clothing will not be able to attend the session.

Children must wear long legged bottoms during all sessions.

Essential items to bring

- Waterproof trousers and jacket
- A warm layer e.g fleece or sweater
- Spare trousers and top
- Spare socks
- Spare underwear if toilet training
- Wellies
- Comfortable walking shoes

Please be aware that we will be outside during all weathers so on particularly hot days children will need sun hats and sun cream and during colder months children will need warm hats, gloves and socks.

We recommend layers as opposed to bulky items of clothing so that they can be removed or added to as and when needed.

**Please note that your child and their clothes will get muddy! We will prioritise fun and learning over the preservation of clothing so please do not send your child in anything that is precious.**

## **Food and Drink**

The children are required to bring a healthy packed lunch from home, including a drink.

When choosing foods please remember the children will be outdoors and “on the go” all day so it is important they have enough energy to fuel them.

WildTime PlayGroup will provide an organic fruit/vegetable based snack every session that the children will be able to access as/when they require.

We have a fridge available for the storage of lunch boxes on warmer days. Please label any individual items not contained in your child’s lunch box.

Due to allergies we do not allow the sharing of foods between children or adults.

Please ensure that your child has a suitable water bottle that can be refilled during the day.

No fizzy drinks please.

We kindly ask that children do not bring hot liquids for snacks or lunch as these pose a safety risk.

WildTime PlayGroup does not have the necessary authorisation to prepare or heat food on the premises.

Please indicate on the Registration Forms if your child has any food allergies or special dietary requirements.

We reserve the right to implement a ‘nut-free’ provision if it is deemed essential in order to protect a child attending WildTime PlayGroup.

For more information please see our *Food and Drink Policy*.

## **Late Collection or Failure to Collect**

You must notify us as soon as possible if you will be late to collect your child – this helps reduce the stress on the child.

If, after closing time your child has not been collected, we will make every attempt to contact you on all the numbers you have provided, including the Emergency Contact numbers. Please see our *Late and Non-collection of Children Policy* for more information.

## **Administering Medication**

Medication must be in the original packaging and have your child’s name and dose clearly on the container. You will need to complete our Medication Form with a member of staff before staff will administer any medication. When medication is administered at preschool, it will be recorded on the form. On collecting your child, you will be asked to read and sign

to acknowledge the details recorded on the Medication Form. Ideally all medicines should be administered by the child's parents.

If your child has regular medication – for example an inhaler for asthma you must ensure it is handed over to a member of staff and collected at the end of the day. A separate form will be completed for this purpose. If your child does not have their regular medication with them, they will be unable to attend the session. If your child has more complex medical needs we will work closely with you and health professionals involved in your child's care to ensure we meet their needs fully.

For more information please see our *Administration Of Medicine Policy*.

### **Sickness**

We recognise that both staff and children are vulnerable to infections/illness and do not expect children to attend if they are not well enough to do so.

Please notify us as soon as possible if your child will be absent from a session.

We reserve the right to refuse entry to any child or family who, in the opinion of the Manager/Team Leader, are not well enough to attend or pose a risk of infection to other children. If a child becomes unwell during a session, we will contact you to collect them. In the case of a serious accident or illness occurring then you will be contacted immediately along with the medical professional and the appropriate action taken. Your child must only return to preschool once they are well enough to do so.

For more information, including details of exclusion periods, please see our *Sickness and Illness Policy*.

### **Accidents**

First aid is always administered by a qualified first aider, who will decide the most appropriate course of action. A written accident report should be signed by the parent on collection. If you would like to discuss an incident in more detail please speak to a member of staff. If your child has an existing injury on arrival at Preschool, staff will record this in the Incident Book which you will need to sign.

For more information please see our *Accident and Incidents Policy*.

## **Toileting**

Children in nappies are changed regularly in the designated changing room in earth house, when possible by their Key Person. We recommend nappies instead of pull-ups as these are easier to change without having to fully undress the child

Parents/carers provide their own supply of nappies, wipes or cotton wool for their child, we are happy to use cotton or disposable nappies.

Toilet trained children use the toilet facilities in Earth House.

We encourage the children to be as independent as possible while still providing supervision and support. Warm water and soap are provided for hand washing.

For more information please see our *Toileting and Intimate Care Policy*.

## **Safeguarding**

We fully recognise our responsibilities for safeguarding and child protection. We know that children learn best when they are healthy, safe and secure, when their individual needs are met, and when they have positive relationships with the adults caring for them.

- We work with children, parents, external agencies and the community to ensure the welfare and safety of children and to give them the very best start in life. Children have the right to be treated with respect, be helped to thrive and to be safe from any abuse in whatever form.
- We support the children within our care, protect them from maltreatment and have robust procedures in place to prevent the impairment of children's health and development. In our play group we strive to protect children from the risk of radicalisation and we promote acceptance and tolerance of other beliefs and cultures.

We have two Designated Safeguarding Leads at WildTime, Dominic Miles and Kerri Clover.

For more information please refer to our *Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy*.

## **Information and Records**

We are legally required to record information relating to the children attending WildTime PlayGroup. Information may be shared with other professional agencies involved as applicable and is stored securely in the WildTime site office.

For more information please refer to our *Confidentiality Policy*.

## **Photographs and Video Recordings**

We use photographs and videos daily as a means of recording the children's experiences and developmental progress and share these images with you through the Learning Journals. Images may also be used for publicity and promotion purposes including on our website and Facebook page. We require permission to take photographs and video recordings of your child. Please ensure you complete the consent form or speak to us if you have any concerns about this.

For more information please see our *Use of Mobile Phone, Cameras and Other Recording Devices Policy*.

## **Mobile Phones**

We have a strict policy regarding mobile phones, cameras and other recording devices in line with our Safeguarding Policy and ask that should parents/carers wish to take photographs at the setting please ensure only your child is in the picture.

For more information please see our *Use of Mobile Phone, Cameras and Other Recording Devices Policy*.

## **Complaints and Compliments**

We believe that Wild Time Play Group provides good care and education for all our children, and that management and staff work very hard to build positive relationships with all parents and carers. However, if you have any concerns we hope you will be able to discuss these with us so we can resolve issues through discussion and mutual understanding. If you feel the concern is not dealt with effectively, you can make a formal complaint following our Complaints Procedure which is detailed in our Complaints and Compliments Policy.

You may also contact Ofsted directly if you feel we are not meeting the EYFS requirements or if you wish to report anything relating to your child's childcare. Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester, M1 2WD. Telephone: 0300 123 123

Our Ofsted Setting Reference Number is: 2556174

## **Policies**

WildTime PlayGroup has detailed policies and procedures in place, which are available to all on our website – [www.WildTime.org.uk](http://www.WildTime.org.uk). Our policies help us to make sure that the service we provide is of a high quality and that being a member of the WildTime community is an enjoyable and beneficial experience for each and every person. We encourage you to read and familiarise yourself with our policies and procedures.

If you have any further questions regarding the preschool or the information contained here, please don't hesitate to contact Kerri Clover (kerri.WildTime@gmail.com) or Dominic Miles (WildTimeeducation@gmail.com) who will be happy to help.

We look forward to our adventures together



## **Learning and Development Policy**

### **Introduction**

- We believe that children should be given the time, space and environment to explore, investigate, experiment, set their own challenges, play, learn and develop.
- We have high expectations of our children and believe they are capable of high-level problem solving, assessing risk, creating and imagining their own challenges and objectives and developing resilience and persistence through their learning.
- We believe that if children set their own challenges and direct their own learning they will be more motivated and engaged and their self-esteem will flourish.
- We believe children should be listened to and spoken to with respect, in a way that values their opinions, understanding and feelings.
- We believe children should learn how to play and work collaboratively with each other and how to be strong independent individuals.
- We strive to develop an understanding and respect of the natural environment in all our children.

### **How our approach achieves this**

We believe that with sensitive support and quality interactions from the adults at preschool, all the above happens naturally in the woods and preschool buildings.

The environment is full of open ended resources: leaves, sticks, logs, mud, water etc, which provide endless opportunities for creative and imaginative play, investigation, problem solving and critical thinking. The woods are quiet and calm and being in a natural environment has a positive impact on children's wellbeing. There is a feeling of space yet the woods are at the same time intellectually stimulating – it is a rich, fascinating environment that engages the children. Our high ratios of adults to children means we are able to give children time to talk, listen and respond in conversations.

### **Adult-led and child-led activity**

At WildTime PlayGroup much of the learning is child-led, with sensitive interactions from the adults supporting the children in setting and working towards their own goals. The daily routine at WildTime PlayGroup is structured so that the children are given as much time to explore their own interests as possible. In this way we give children the time needed to invest in developing their own ideas and achieving their own aims. As well as developing their ability to think critically and creatively, this leads to greater self-esteem, confidence and motivation to learn.

We also provide adult-led learning opportunities; these are carefully planned to meet the children's individual needs, develop skills and follow interests. We aim as much as possible to develop skills that the children can go on to use independently when setting and solving their own challenges. We encourage all children to participate in adult-led activities and ensure that all children take part in a range of activities during their time at WildTime PlayGroup. However, the children are not obliged to take part in every adult-led activity we plan. We believe that children who learn in this way develop key skills that will enable them to succeed at school and beyond.

### **The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)**

We follow the EYFS, which is the Government's statutory framework that sets the standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old. In terms of learning and development, the EYFS has two main strands – the first concerns the children's learning, defined as prime and specific areas. The second strand concerns how children learn and is defined as the characteristics of effective learning.

### **The Seven Areas of Learning and Development**

All areas of learning and development are important and inter-connected. The first three are defined as the prime areas - they are particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning and for building the capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive.

➤ Personal, social and emotional development (PSED): We recognise that children need to be happy and relaxed at the setting before they can learn. Children find the natural environment less stressful as there is more space and it is quiet and calm. We help them develop a positive sense of themselves and others; form positive relationships; develop respect and understanding for others; celebrate diversity; develop social skills; learn how to manage their feelings; understand appropriate behaviour in groups (see Positive Behaviour policy) and to have confidence in their own abilities.

➤ Physical Development (PD): This happens naturally and to a very high level at our preschool where we provide opportunities for children to be active and interactive and to develop their coordination, control and movement. Our children spend much of the day running, climbing trees and hills, rolling down hills, balancing, digging, carrying... We also provide plenty of opportunities to develop fine motor control by tying knots, threading, using tools, mark making, moulding clay, etc.

Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity and make healthy choices in relation to food. We support this by teaching the importance of exercise, healthy diet and ways to keep healthy and safe.

➤ Communication and Language (CL): Language development in the Early Years is fundamental. It underpins learning in all other areas and is crucial to the development of Characteristics of Effective Learning. At WildTime PlayGroup we have created a provision which gives children the very best opportunity for language development. Our high staff ratios and calm, low-noise environment mean that children can hear and be heard more easily, providing the best environment to develop their listening and attention and speaking. This coupled with the high degree of child-initiated, creative activity, means that they develop their ability to hold proper conversations and use language to help them achieve their own aims. Adults at WildTime PlayGroup understand the importance of proper conversations and selective questioning to stretch the children and develop their understanding and language skills, to encourage critical thinking, and to provide a secure setting in which they are valued.

The Framework defines four specific areas of learning and development through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied.

➤ Literacy which is split into Reading and Writing:

- Reading is developed through telling, re-enacting and sharing stories every session. Hearing stories and learning how stories are structured is one of the best ways to support the children to learn to read themselves.

- The wood is the perfect place to develop early writing skills as it is a blank canvas for mark making (the first stage of writing) - on the ground, on the bark of a tree or even on a large leaf. Sticks, clay, mud and water are perfect writing materials and the children are presented with many opportunities to use them, with support and guidance from adults. There are also mark making activities and opportunities set up in Earth House each session to allow the children to develop these skills both indoors and out.

- We develop the children's phonic knowledge and understanding through songs and games, encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. We have a 'sound of the week' and encourage children to bring in items from home that start with that sound to share at group times.

➤ Mathematics: which is split into Numbers and Shape, Space and Measures:

- Concrete, real examples of size, quantity and shape are the best way to give children a good grasp of mathematics. At WildTime PlayGroup we develop mathematical understanding by encouraging the children to use practical maths and problem solving in their everyday activities.

- There are many opportunities for counting and early number work in our activities both indoors and out. For example we look closely at the shapes of trees and leaves and the pattern on bark and the children use them to identify the different trees in the wood. Outdoors, in the woods, the passing of time throughout the day and the changing of seasons are very evident. We encourage the children to notice the signs of change and they develop a good understanding of time and seasons.

➤ Understanding the World:

At WildTime PlayGroup we learn first-hand about the natural world around us: animals, plants, the weather, the water cycle, evaporation, shadows, forces etc. We guide the children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out

about people, places, technology and the environment. We incorporate technology into our learning where appropriate.

We recognise that technology does not only relate to digital devices - we use other forms of technology that the children may not have access to at home such as real tools (saws and hand drills), pulleys and binoculars. Use of this type of technology is excellent in developing the children's Characteristics of Effective Learning – the unusual and exciting nature of the tools, and the fact that they can be tricky to master, means that success has a positive effect on self-esteem, confidence and resilience. The technical skills they acquire and the results they can produce lend themselves well to being applied in the children's own creative and problem-solving activities for example, using a saw to make a stick the right length.

➤ Expressive Arts and Design;

Outside - We believe that the natural environment is the very best place for children to express themselves artistically. Because of our wealth of open-ended resources, the children are not only free to be creative and use their imaginations, they are required to do so. Choosing to not provide closed resources and toys that usually have specific purposes means that the children must create with what they have and decide the purpose for the material or object they select. In role play, for example, a fallen tree can be a motorbike, a train, a pirate ship, a factory, different shops and restaurants with leaves as money or tickets, and many other things which the children decide for themselves.

Visual art and design is also much more creative, as the children use found and selected objects and materials to create works of art in the woods. Sometimes this is adult-led, for example clay modelling of tree spirits or leaf patterns, but more often it is child initiated and truly creative with the children starting with sticks, mud, leaves, stones, string etc. This in turn encourages the design and planning aspects, as the children work out how to achieve a particular result without pens or brushes.

Inside – we provide opportunities for small world play, creative activities such as play dough and painting in order to foster and develop artistic skills.

### **The Characteristics of Effective Learning**

At WildTime we believe the development of these fundamental Characteristics of Effective Learning brings huge benefits in terms of how the children feel about themselves and how they continue to learn and develop in the future, whether through school or Home Education.

The Framework outlines three characteristics of effective teaching and learning which must be reflected on through our planning and guidance.

➤ Playing and Exploring - Engagement

Children learn through finding out and exploring, playing with what they know and being willing to 'have a go'. Activities, relationships and the environment at the preschool encourage children to explore, using a variety of resources, carefully providing support when it is needed. Staff use the children's experiences at preschool to enhance development providing suitable learning opportunities to support and engage children through their interests.

➤ Active Learning - Motivation

The opportunities planned at the preschool provide stimulation to the children who choose to investigate them through support from staff. Children become motivated by being involved and concentrating, keep trying and enjoying and achieving what they set out to do. Through praise, recognition and interaction staff help children become aware of their own goals, learning together and from each other. The environment is regularly reappraised, reflecting on resources, their purpose and the children's choices.

#### ➤ Creating and Thinking Critically – Thinking

Thinking is a natural process all individuals experience and supports decision making. Children are encouraged to have their own ideas and express them openly within the preschool. Staff encourage children through interaction and discussions to make links with their environment, use different forms of communication and explore all available resources. Activities provide opportunity to plan, consider ideas and for feedback to be given by both adults and children.

We encourage children's independence, allow them to lead their own learning and make their own decisions as far as possible, and give them an environment full of open ended natural resources and the time and space to make the most of them. The children are used to solving problems, finding new ways to do things, being resilient when things don't go to plan the first time, and assessing their own risks. These are things that they do all the time, every time they come to the preschool.

#### **Planning**

- We follow the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework to ensure we provide a curriculum which promotes teaching and learning, ensures children are "school ready" and gives children a broad range of knowledge, skills and experiences; providing the right foundation for good future progress through school and life.
- We view all aspects of learning and development as equally important and ensure a flexible approach is maintained which responds quickly to children's learning and development needs. This is achieved through a balance of adult led and child-initiated opportunities within the outdoor and indoor environment.
- We acknowledge that children learn in different ways and at different rates and plan for this accordingly through both child and adult led activities, this ensures all children make good progress and no child gets left behind.
- Learning and development opportunities are planned based on an individual child's needs and interests and are regularly reviewed and assessed through informal observation and discussion, which in turn, informs future planning and next steps for individual children, groups of children and the preschool as a whole.
- We recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents/carers as they are, after all, the children's first and most enduring educators. When parents/carers and practitioners work together in early year's settings, the results have a positive impact on children's learning and development.
- We provide an online individual learning journal for each child, evidencing their abilities and progress, matching this to the curriculum and identifying next steps of learning. This is always accessible to parents/carers who are also encouraged to contribute thus providing the "bigger picture" of learning.

### **Support for children**

Staff use observations, assessments and partnerships with parents to identify areas where a child may require additional support for their learning. Dominic Miles is the named Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) for WildTime education and Kerri Clover is the named SENCO for the PlayGroup. They work closely with staff and families to support them through the processes. The following strategies are used to support staff in early identification of children needing additional support: formative and summative assessments, regular drop in sessions for staff and parents to share concerns and information, identifying next steps in learning, tracking development, observations and interactions with children, multi- agency working and sign posting parents to other services who may be able to offer guidance and additional support.

### **Monitoring and reviewing the Curriculum at WildTime PlayGroup**

WildTime PlayGroup values the importance of reflective practice and the benefits this can have on the children's learning and development as well as enhancing the provision at the preschool.

The following practices support this: staff meetings, feedback from staff, parents and children, sharing information freely with the whole staff team, supervisor meetings, reviewing regularly both local and central changes in policies regarding the Early Years sector, meeting with other childcare professionals to share ideas of good practice.

### **The preschool community**

We support children to work and play co-operatively and develop empathy for others. We encourage the children to participate in reflection time at the end of each day, to talk about what they have enjoyed and what they would like to do next time. We encourage a sense of community through group activities, and a respect for all children and adults in the preschool.