

The Round House Primary Academy

Part of The Diamond Learning Partnership Trust

Established in the Queen's Jubilee Year 2012

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CEO: Mrs Susannah Connell BSc MA (Ed Mgt) NPQH
Executive Headteacher: Mrs Tracy Bryden BSc (Hons) PGCE

8th September 2023

Dear Parents & Carers

Year 4 - Forest School

We are pleased to offer children in Year 4 the opportunity to attend the Forest School. All the children in Year 4 will be split into three groups and your child has been selected to attend Forest School throughout **this Autumn Term 2023**.

What is Forest School?

Forest school originated in Scandinavia and was brought to England in the 1990s, initially in a Nursery context. Since then the concept has spread quickly across the country, with schools only this year being able to gain recognition as a practising 'Forest School'. The overall purpose of Forest School is to raise a child's self-esteem by creating a safe, creative and free environment that encourages children to explore their own capabilities and develop their social and practical skills in a way that utilises and celebrates a connection with nature. It is always a non-judgemental process, where learners feel safe to explore the outdoors, and their own potentials, in a way that they feel most comfortable. A huge element of this process is learning through play, and allowing the children to discover the natural world in the way they find most engaging.

At The Round House, we have identified these aims for our Forest School Programme:

- To challenge ourselves in a safe learning environment
- To develop a curiosity and respect for nature and discover the changes that are always happening around us
- To gain independence and confidence in our own abilities
- To realise our own potentials
- To learn new, practical skills
- To build strong relationships with others
- To become compassionate, empathic individuals who care about others and their own individuality
- To create memorable experiences that will support all areas of development and have an impact beyond the sessions

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The current recognised benefits, based on research of children in Forest Schools are raised levels of self-esteem and confidence, an improvement in physical exercise, increased proficiency in social interaction and higher levels of concentration in classes.

What will the sessions look like?

The sessions are held on a **Friday afternoon**. The children will miss 15 minutes of their lunch in order to get changed so we can leave for the woods promptly at 1pm so we have as much of the afternoon as possible at Aunties Woods. We will create a transition into the woods, so the children can identify the change in learning experience which often involves a game or being greeted by a 'creature of the woods'. The session will always start and end with a group circle where children can get to know each other. Importantly, in these areas of the session children can get involved as much or as little as they want to. The idea being that as the sessions go on, children become more confident in talking in front of both their peers and adults.

After group time the session is mostly directed by the children and what they wish to do. There will be a range of resources available and a suggested plan but generally the children can utilise the space and respond to being in nature however they wish. This might be through building dens, climbing trees, bug hunting, fire building and cooking, knot tying, creative projects and so on. Within Forest School there is also the potential to use a variety of tools – these will only be used when the adults feel a child is ready to do so, and will be completed under careful supervision. The possibilities are endless in the woodland, and although there will be a plan for the session, how the children feel on the day and the direction they might choose to go in, could change this. Before we leave the space, we will again come together as a group, say goodbye to the woodland, and transition back into school. The children will then arrive back at school around 3pm ready to end the day on time.

Throughout the sessions all children will be subtly observed. This will not only be to identify gaps in their practical skills and knowledge so we can target individual children and support their learning, but also to inform planning for the next week based on what they have engaged with most, or want to know more about.

Please note that children will not miss any of their classroom learning in order to participate in these sessions. Timetables have been arranged to ensure that children involved complete their English and Maths learning in their classes in the morning and therefore the Forest School session will substitute their afternoon ICE Zone time.

What will they need?

As the programme is run from a woodland space, this means that the children will be spending lots of time outside. It is likely that the activities the children get involved in will mean they may get dirty. In terms of the children getting as much as possible from the experience **it is important that they are not in clothes that they are worried about getting dirty**, as this can sometimes hold children back and ultimately affect their overall engagement with the activities. Therefore, **old clothes are ideal as there is then little concern over their condition and children can just focus on getting stuck in!** Although this term we are likely to be lucky with the weather, **long trousers are always recommended** for Forest School, as this is an extra layer of protection from things such as scratches, stings or bites as we will be utilising all of the woodland space.

Suggested clothing list:

Waterproof coat

Sun Hat

Long, comfortable trousers

Appropriate outdoor footwear (wellies, walking boots, trainers)

Warm socks

What happens now?

Most children have already experienced Forest School but out on the school field and they are aware of the adults they will be working with, who are all familiar faces from school.

The sessions will begin on **Friday 22nd September 2023**. So please could children have all appropriate clothing in school by then.

We do need permission for your child to participate in Forest School, and up-to-date medical information as we will be off-site and immersing ourselves into the woodland. Therefore, we would be grateful if you could complete and return the form attached to the school office by **Tuesday 19th September 2023**.

If you have any questions about Forest School and your child's involvement, or feel there is any additional information we need to know, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracy Bryden', written over a horizontal line.

Mrs Tracy Bryden
Executive Headteacher

On behalf of The Round House Primary Academy (part of TDLPT)

The Round House Primary Academy - Forest School Medical Information Form



Child's full Name	
Date of Birth	
Contact Name and relationship to child	
Home Address	
Telephone Numbers	Home Work Mobile E-mail

Has your child had any of the following?

Illness		Comment	Medication needed, please specify
Asthma/Bronchitis	YES/NO		
Sight/hearing difficulties	YES/NO		
Heart condition	YES/NO		
Diabetes	YES/NO		
Epilepsy	YES/NO		
Allergies: e.g. nuts, pollen, materials	YES/NO		
Have they ever been stung by a wasp or bee? If yes please describe the reaction	YES/NO		
Date of last tetanus injection -Are immunisations up to date?	YES/NO		

Do you give permission for Forest School staff to:

Allow your child to participate in all forest school activities including fire making and tool use?	
Administer first aid to your child?	
Take photographs and videos of your child? (These will only be shared on the closed Facebook group if you have already given your photo consent via the school office)	

Signed:

Date: