



HAPPY HABITATS
taking care of your environment

FOREST SCHOOL HANDBOOK

JANUARY 23

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Happy Habitats Forest School

Authored by: Angie Cruse



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Insurance

Site Insurance and Public liability

Docs.....

DBS Check

Disclosure Scotland

Miss Angela Cruse

DOB 08/09/1975

Disclosure Number: 20000000348181

Date of Issue: 20/11/2017

No Convictions for disclosure



Forest School Practitioners Award

Certificate

Awaiting.....

Other Skills/ Qualifications: ITC Level 3 Award in Forest School First Aid

Habitat Management for Conservation – Acorn Ecology.

Numerous species identification courses and advanced Bryophyte Botany with the British Bryological Society

Badger Surveying, trap siting, welfare & vaccination - Module 2 and 3 with Animal Plant Health Agency (APHA)

Level 2 award –CITY & GUILDS/ NPTC

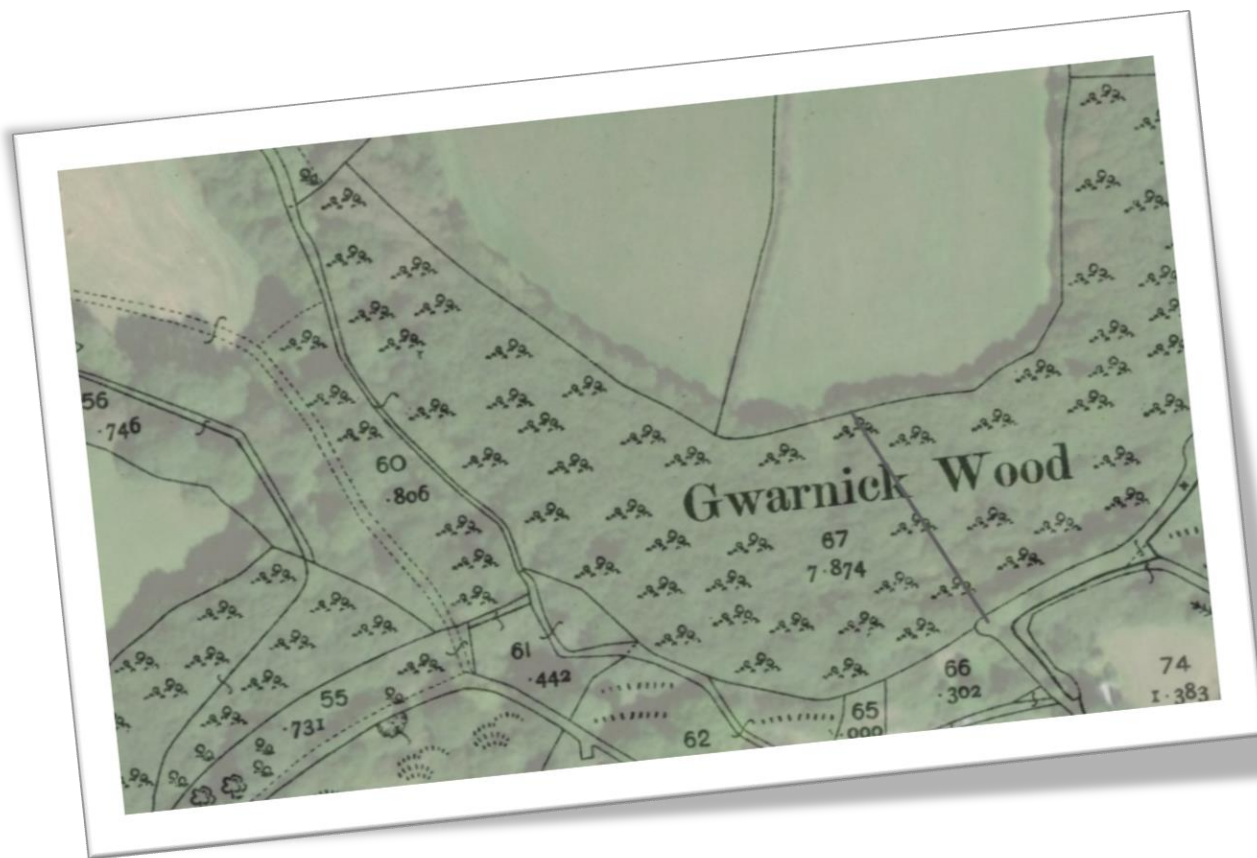
- 206 Access a tree using a rope and harness (T/504/0316)
- 306 Carry out aerial rescue operations (504/0322)
- 203 Fell and process trees up to 380mm (M/504/0321)
- 201 Carry out maintenance of chainsaw and cutting system (K/504/0319)
- 202 Cross cutting timber using a chainsaw (T/504/0319)

Experience - Trained with Dartmoor Search & Rescue (Mountain Rescue England & Wales)

Dog sled expedition leader with Active Tromso AS, Northern Norway.

Trek leader with Clubul Montan Altitudine – Mountaineers club, The Carpathians, Rasnov, Romania.

Site Information



Location: Gwarnick Wood, Idless,
Truro, Cornwall TR4 9QT

/// midwinter.lemmings.thankful (download: what3words)

Owned by: HAPPYHABITATS
Angie Cruse and Nigel Powell
5 Chapel Row
Tremar Coombe
Cornwall
PL14 5EY

07795 314 814 (Angie's Mobile)
angie@happyhabitats.co.uk

**Directions: From Truro City
Cathedral.**

Head east on High Cross
towards Cathedral Ln

354 ft

Turn left onto Old Bridge St
413 ft

Turn left onto St Clement
St/B3284

2.3 mi

At the roundabout, take
the 1st exit and stay
on B3284

118 ft

Turn right onto Ashley Rd
0.1 mi

Turn right onto Idless Ln
269 ft

Turn left

Destination will be on the
left

The Site:

Gwarnick wood is categorised as Ancient Woodland and is a designated County Wildlife Site (CWS)

Angie and Nigel purchased the woodland in 2018 for wildlife and woodland habitat conservation.



Our woodland is 4.75 acres & consists of Upper Oak woodland, flat open rides, trails, wet woodland (willow/alder carr) a marsh/wildlife ponds and stream.

The woodland has been managed in the past as an Oak coppice for charcoal up until WWII. Although the tree stools are many 100's of years old, this previous form of management created a similar aged woodland structure with a dense canopy. Therefore, our work includes management techniques to improve age diversity, species diversity and thinning to generate more light, benefitting the ground flora and original seed bank.

We have full management plans and ecology surveys upon request.

All work is carried out by Nigel & Angie, both qualified Arborists and qualified in Habitat management. No work is carried out during Forest School, although we occasionally use our work as an educational tool.



Please note: Happy Habitats also carries out Woodland Management for other clients, as well as tree surgery, habitat surveys, consultancy, pesticide free invasive species management, wildlife gardens and landscaping. All our work is to enhance biodiversity. As well as considering a trees health, we always prioritise the associated wildlife a tree or woodland supports.

Taking care of your environment

The Woodland Habitat



The Woodland Flora
In Spring the floor is carpeted with native bluebells and Woodland Anemone. Many ancient woodland indicators and plenty of lichens, bryophytes and Fungi!



Trees
Oak, Ash, Hazel, Elder, Sycamore, Alder, Beech, Willow, Aspen, Elm, Birch, Rowan, Hawthorn & Holly



The Residents

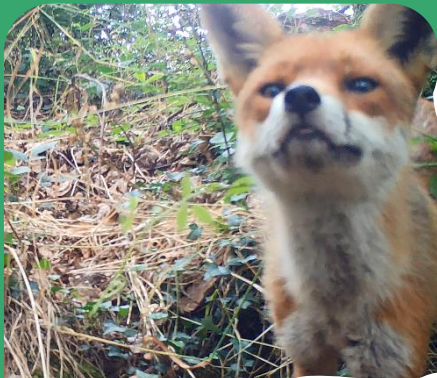


inHg - 6C 05/27/2019 06:08AM HAPHAB1



6C 04/16/2019 03:34PM HAPHAB1

We treat the woodland as the wildlifes' home. We coexist with nature, watch the camera's and follow their footsteps



07/28/2019 07:42PM



inHg 1 2C 10/22/2018 12:53AM SPECOP2

Among the mammals & birds we also meet the invertebrate's



29.74 inHg 1 -6C 04/08/2019 06:56AM HAP





Ecological impact & environmental policy

We committed ourselves to surveying & monitoring our woodland for nearly 2 years prior to starting forest school. We have studied the changes throughout the seasons, where plant species grow, fauna lives and where improvement can help species diversity and wildlife populations. As well as monitoring by eye, we have numerous wildlife cameras placed throughout the woodland. We know where our flora thrives, wildlife friends live and studied the young that have grown up in the woodland habitat here.

This research and trail camera footage forms part of our activities, as well as understanding where we can and cannot disturb. Our Forest School is committed to increasing species populations, coexisting with wildlife, enhancing their habitat and encouraging the animals to go about their lives safely within the woodland. We will ensure no wildlife is compelled to leave the safety of their home we help to protect. Please find our environment and sustainability policy & management plans here:

happyhabitats.co.uk/environment-policy – happyhabitats.co.uk/management-plans



Flora

Late spring is the most colourful and alive a woodland appears. The ground is carpeted with native bluebells and woodland anemone. The anemone spreads 6 feet every 100 years & therefore an important ancient woodland indicator. FS activities can impact on flora such as this, especially when not seen throughout other seasons & why we have an ecological impact mitigation plan. You are also invited to check out our full species list available here:

Happyhabitats.co.uk/species-list

Fauna

All fauna we find is specified on our species list and is updated regularly. We have many badgers and cubs in our woodland, mostly living in the hedges surrounding us, we have many inactive setts used by resident foxes and rabbits. Deer live in the woods and we have witnessed 3 fawns born in 2019 that remain living here. There is a breeding pair of Tawny owls among numerous others. We have nesting buzzards & their young in the summer months. There are many species of birds, including several species of tit, Redwings, woodpeckers, blackbirds, song thrushes and nuthatches. The grey squirrels are welcome here and we believe they are needed in the absence of any remaining suitable/large enough habitat for red squirrels. Damage caused by squirrels within a woodland setting, creates good habitat for other wildlife such as bats.



Ecological Impact Assessment

Activity	Considerations	Impact	Mitigation
Outdoor games	Consistent use of main area	Compaction of soil, disturbance of young/ delicate wildflowers.	The base of FS has been picked through observation over 2 years. An area with the least biodiversity. Areas will be rotated accordingly.
Fire building	Need of dry dead wood supply. Where to situate safely not affecting ground flora	Removing valuable dead wood habitat, possible spread of fires from dry organic matter, potential fires from above branches, area will be void of ground flora.	We are lucky enough to have too many trees of similar size that need thinning, wood will be seasoned and stored appropriately for fire use. No standing dead wood is felled or ground dead wood taken for fire use. Replanting native species is always taking place. We follow the safe use of fire policy and procedures.
Cooking	As above, water use & food hygiene. Waste.	As above & possible litter. Boiling water thrown on delicate flora/fauna	As above + Single use plastics discouraged. All water will be used sustainably.
Woodland walks	Regular use of trails, flora affected. Wildlife disturbance. Getting close to setts and dens. Maintenance of bramble, 6 monthly maintenance/trimming of trails.	Compaction of soil. Disturbance of setts and dens, Unsettled deer.	Walks will be a peaceful & educational experience. We ensure path is not close to setts and dens & ensure participants appreciate this is a doorway to a home. No footprints in spoil, as participant can be traced! (as part of a tracking activity.)
Tree Climbing	Tying ropes, healthy bark, stable limbs and forks, which trees? concentrated use of ground and tree.	Erosion of soil around roots and bark damage. Weakening of branches and forks	Very few trees are suitable to climb without a harness. Those chosen will not have tight unions, will be established trees & possible damage monitored. Trees will be alternated.
Tool use, whittling, making things	Sustainability & supply of green wood. Tools being left in environment. Where to maintain a safe tool use area.	Use of young branches and similar aged trees. Left sharp items. Compaction of soil and footfall on flora	We continually plant & manage woodland for age diversity. We also have a neglected woodland next door we manage. Tool checklist at the end of each session. Rotated tool use area
Arts and crafts	Where to maintain a safe tool use area. Sustainability & supply of vegetation for art. Use of synthetic materials.	Compaction of soil and footfall on flora Whether enough population of species to maintain crafts. Leaving synthetic items.	Rotation of craft areas and sporadic sit downs. If flora affected by picking, the gathering will take place on route to FS. All materials used will be sustainably supplied by forest school and checked in.
Hammocks & rope swings	Where to place with least impact on flora.	Compaction of soil and footfall on flora	Lots of trees & areas for rotation where ivy is dominant
Building shelters	Where to place with least impact on ground flora. Tying ropes on trees	Compaction of soil and footfall on flora. Health of bark	Lots of trees & areas for rotation where ivy is dominant. Bark health will be checked.
Free play	Where to play with least impact on ground flora. Larger boundaries.	Flat areas in use for free play will impact ground flora	Encouraging the spreading out of group and inspire games which utilise a varied area & where ivy dominant.
Toileting	Compost toilet location, and waste management.	Long period in same area. Ensuring waste is reusable matter.	Located in least diverse areas on rotation. Constant supply of sawdust, leaf litter & woodchip.

Happy Habitats Forest School

Principles

At Happy Habitats we are entirely aligned with the ethos & recommended practices of the Forest School Association (FSA), from initial training of each leader by an FSA approved trainer, to the full 6 principles agreed by the UK Forest School community in 2011.



The 6 key principles:

Principle 1: Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.

Principle 2: Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.

Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

Principle 5: Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

Principle 6: Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning



About us

Happy Habitats Aims and Ethos

Our main objective at Happy Habitats is to enhance the experience of the natural world, creating the interest to coexist with nature to enjoy & appreciate for the rest of our lives. We believe that understanding the importance of nature and its resources from a young age will help shape the much-needed environmental attitudes of the future.

We want to help fuel the imagination, help a child to become resourceful and confident, strong enough to overcome obstacles and discover what makes them truly happy. The complex natural environment is an essential component to learning how to be dynamic in the real world and achieve our goals. Making a simple tool from a piece of wood is not only creative but helps us appreciate the value of the things we take for granted.

The freedom of natural play.

Forest Schools connection to nature replaces what a well-meaning society, over time has discouraged. Compared to previous generations, circumstances caused by stranger danger, blame/claim culture & traffic safety to name a few. Simple activities such as walking to school & outdoor play has fallen dramatically in recent decades. The solution lies within Forest School



Why we are here

Angie and Nigel found each other in 2016 and it was all about trees from the beginning. Its why they grow stronger together. With Angie's love of the Carpathian forests, expertise in "leave no trace" experiences and her ideals in coexisting with nature, meeting Nigel with 30 years' experience in arboriculture, is where their journey began. The Forest School revelation came after being so fraught by the natural world being constantly degraded by human activities such as deforestation and development. They decided to buy a woodland in the heart of Cornwall to manage it for wildlife habitat. It was now time to share their findings with future generations in the most positive ways possible: – Forest School with all its essential benefits for a healthy natural childhood. In turn we fully appreciate & understand how the natural environment is an essential component to human & other species survival.

It was important for Angie to be trained in this field by an FSA endorsed trainer, Richard Irvine Outdoor Learning was just the ticket!

Angie grew up in the adventure sports industry and later became an expedition guide in Arctic Norway & the Carpathians. Co-created multi activity expeditions with all risk assessments & emergency procedures for the natural & sometimes hostile environments.

Now running two environmental companies, Angie is responsible for the holistic approach to environmental management. With Nigel's arboricultural experience, they are now managing woodlands for the benefit of biodiversity, for clients such as the National Trust.

Nigel is a qualified climbing arborist & consultant with a degree in Environmental Science. Although he plays just a supporting role at Forest School, he has bought up 3 children single-handedly & quite simply, the most kind & generous person Angie knows.

Normal Operating Procedures



Kit List (what Happy Habitats supplies)

- Dry Wood, kindling, newspaper, cotton wool, fire gloves, fire steels
- Large Kettle, 3 storm kettles, frying pan, large pan & utensils
- Ingredients for simple snacks, tea bags, hot chocolate, coffee, milk, sugar & water.
- Toolbox: including hand saws, mallets, craft knives, splitting tools, hand drills
- Spare warm clothes and some waterproofs, towels, tea towels, sitting mats,
- 4 tarpaulins, 6 ropes, knot practice ropes,
- Spade, trowel, rake, buckets
- Hand washing facilities, soap, water and sanitizer gel (near composting toilet and base)
- Species list (inc poisonous plant posters) safety signs.
- Phone, ipad,
- First Aid & burns Kits (as below) welfare pack and fire blanket

Journey to and from Site

Dropping off can be done safely at the site entrance, we also have use (on request) of the small carpark at the bottom of the wood, left of woodland gate. (please support local café)

Where required we will arrange minibus transport.

From the gate, the Forest School day starts, the small walk to the base has several points of interest and we take our time learning the woodland terrain.

Safe use of hand tools



General rules for tools:

- Children must only use tools under the supervision of the Forest School Leader
 - We ensure that children place craft knives in their case when not in use and kept in the lockable tin when finished with.
 - We always pull knives out from case away from body and at a right angle to body.
 - Children always sit down when using craft knives and use away from body as trained
 - All participants of FS are sat an arm's length away from each other when using knives.
 - We ensure guards/ sheaths are in place when tools are not being used
 - Children do not help themselves to tools
 - We always return tools to the toolbox after use
 - Tools must only be used in the designated tool area
 - Children do not walk around with tools
 - Saws are only used on the work horse and supervised at all times
 - Children are trained to hold mallets, use hand drills and splitting tools correctly
- You can find our tool training guide at www.happyhabitats.co.uk/forestschoo-tool-use

Tool, maintenance and storage

Knives and saws will be counted after every session of tool use.

A logbook kept in the toolbox will be filled in at the end of each session.

Knives will be checked and sharpened where necessary by leader once a month and damaged/worn out tools will be replaced

Keeping Forest school together

At Happy Habitats the health & safety of children & Vulnerable adults is of paramount importance.



All adults have a responsibility to ensure children cannot leave the security of the woodland during Forest School and we fully intend to have the highest adult to child ratio possible in all sessions. Our policy is a minimum of 1 adult to 6 children with a maximum of 16 children and minimum of 3 adults.

Boundaries of the woodland are established with the children through activities and games, making the boundary memorable. This also allows us to consider the child's own 'risk thermometer' as part of the learning process. These activities take place at the beginning of each session to ensure all participants (new and regular) are informed.

At the beginning of each session we have a participant register attached to our dynamic risk assessment checklist. This daily record is kept available throughout the day with emergency telephone numbers along with incident reporting forms.

At several intervals throughout the day and after any activities of free play, we will carry out a headcount. It is our policy to ensure each adult is responsible for ensuring every child (whom they are responsible for) is getting the full potential out of the day and therefore observations on each child is consistent with headcounts.

We will again have a headcount at the end of the Forest School session.

In the unlikely event that a child is missing we will act in accordance with the following procedures. Please visit www.happyhabitats.co.uk/missing-child-procedure

Safe use of Fire



There is a main firepit which is lit on some sessions by the FS leader, on occasions we supervise and teach participants as part of FS activities how to light a fire safely. (Not lit on warm summer days)

This fire keeps participants warm & allows for warm drinks and occasional snacks as part of the FS activities. It is safely situated with no tree/shrub cover, no overhanging branches and without any trip hazards. It is safely marked out with logs and the area is clear of leaf litter & debris. This is located at the woodland activity base and familiar to all on day one.

Other suitable places for a fire are found and discussed with participants as part of FS activities. Participants will be taught how to find and create an area with the above methodology and careful techniques. This is to light small occasional fires as part of a mini woodland expedition, teaching survival skills and how to heat Kelly kettles for warm drinks on route.

Participants of forest school are taught how to build a fire without a naked flame (such as a lighter or matches) They are taught how to safely kneel by a fire, toast snacks, safely put out and dispose of a fire and use fire resistant gloves for kitchen utensils.

Please find out more in our full **Fire Use Policy** here at: www.happyhabitats.co.uk/safe-fire-use



Toileting Procedure



Children will be encouraged to go to the toilet at home/school before forest school begins.

There is one waterless, composting toilet in the woods, which is suitable for children and adults.

We supply 2-piece waterproof trousers & jacket rather than onesies to make life easier for the child when they need to go. If you are supplying waterproofs, we recommend the same.

Hand sanitizer gel is provided at the WC and will be used in addition to soap and cold water at the base camp.

The group will have toilet opportunities throughout the day to use the compost toilet.

In some cases, or where necessary, children will be accompanied by a member of staff away from the group or access areas to find a discrete place in the woods for a wild wee.

Toilet paper and a trowel will be carried in the rucksack just in case.

We will ensure that wild toileting always respects the child's privacy and dignity.

We will ensure wild toileting will be in varied locations so not to impact on the environment.

A 'leave no trace' policy is always maintained in the woodland. Organic matter buried and toilet paper disposed of appropriately by burning and composting techniques carried out by the forest school leader. We do not use single use plastic bags in the woodland, so we provide a small bucket and lid for anything that needs to be moved for processing.

We will ensure that best hygiene practices are maintained throughout the day

Eating and Drinking

The freedom of finding that plump blackberry to eat is something we don't wish to ban at our Forest School & Happy Habitats also recognises that getting to know the woodland environment increases children's interest in edible berries and nuts. However, there is no way of guaranteeing that children will always eat safe berries that are free of wildlife wee!

There is also the possibility that by promoting foraging of berries and nuts may lead to incorrect identification. With these considerations in mind, we adopt the following procedure on the eating of food during forest school sessions.

The following procedures are adjusted appropriately for the age and learning ability of the participant.



- In early sessions of Forest School an activity is based on edible and poisonous plant identification.
- We have 4 signs up visually identifying poisonous plants, berries, nuts & mushrooms
- FS Participants will be reassured that food from the woodland can be safe to eat but can equally be dangerous and that adult (leader/parent/carer) supervision is very important in ensuring only the correct berries and nuts are eaten.
- Children will be taught they should only eat food provided by an appropriate adult whilst at a forest school session.
- Snacks & packed lunches brought by the children may be consumed whilst on forest school sessions: staff will ensure no berries & nuts from the forest are consumed.
- Children will be provided with a snack during forest school sessions to ensure no one is hungry. Any snack prepared on site, will be by staff with a level 2 food hygiene certificate.
- The leader may prepare foraged snacks, only the adults will pick & use knives for food & children may use wooden butter knives to prepare their own snack.
- Adults will ensure children's hands are clean before eating, using water from the water butt and sanitizer.
- During cold weather, we make warm drinks in storm kettles from commercially available products such as hot chocolate. This will be supervised by a member of staff and they will make sure the drink is at a suitable temperature to be safe for the children to drink.
- For older children, we have foraging activities. These activities ensure the adults are confident in simple blackberry ID and tall enough to pick clean berries. Only at this time can they eat berries that are confirmed safe.

Harmful Species in our Woodland



Hemlock Water Dropwort

Highly toxic if ingested.

- Found near many British waterways
- Foliage can look like celery or parsley. Smells sweet.
- In the family Apiaceae which offers many edible plants.

Control measures: We don't go to marsh area, and we carefully supervise stream walks.

Holly (Berries)

Causes vomiting and Diarrhoea

- Very common throughout all woodlands
- Not overly appealing to eat but berries on ground can create curiosity
- Mostly out of reach

Control Measures: Fun ID activities during first sessions in woodland. Told in no uncertain terms, not to eat.



Acorns (Sessile Oak)

Slow symptoms, affects Kidneys

- Only large amounts ingested will cause symptoms
- Not overly appealing
- Quite distinctive, but could look like hazel nuts without shell

Control Measures: Told in no uncertain terms, not to eat.

Bumble Bee (Sting)

Sore! Main issue is allergies

- Mainly seen in spring emerging from hibernation or over wintering nests
- Will stay for spring flowers
- Moves to warmer habitat & nearer flower food source

Control Measures: We learn to respect bumble bees, understand importance and not be afraid



Mosquitos and midges (Bite)

Itchy! Main issue is allergies

- They are there for summer and autumn.
- Please advise of allergies and bring products you want us to use.

Control Measures: We use a fully natural repellent called incognito mosquito. We don't spend time by water in busy mozzzy months.

Our Full species list and poisonous plant signs can be found at happyhabitats.co.uk/woodland-species

Health and Safety Policy

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The full Health and Safety Policy Statement of **Happy Habitats** can be found at:

www.happyhabitats.co.uk/healthandsafety

Organisation (Roles & Responsibilities)

Happy Habitats overall and final responsibility for health and safety is that of:

Angie Cruse, (Owner, Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and ITC Level 3 Award in First Aid)

Angie is also owner of the site and is fully aware of the site's opportunities and limitations.

Forest school sessions offer learning opportunities for children, young people and vulnerable adults. The purpose of many of the activities is to encourage participants to face new challenges and to learn to take reasonable risks. In order to do that safely, all adults involved must know their role and ensure that the necessary risk assessments are carried out regularly and thoroughly. Risks can rarely be eliminated fully, but they can be reduced to a minimum using control measures without limiting opportunities for children to explore and reach their full potential.

Objectives of the document.

- To identify the roles of those involved in Forest Schools, with respect to Health & Safety.
- To identify safety procedures so that they can be carried out effectively and without difficulty.
- To identify suitable and sufficient risk assessment processes to ensure that risks are adequately controlled.
- To develop effective communication systems throughout the setting.
- To ensure that all those involved in Forest School are aware of all Health & Safety documents.
- To develop effective inspection/monitoring procedures to ensure compliance with the HSE and Cornwall County Council's Health & Safety requirements.

Employers must:-

- Assess the risk of activities.
- Introduce measures to control those risks.
- Tell their employees about the measures they have introduced.
- Ensure all employees have read & signed risk assessments, policies & emergency procedures before employment commences.
- Ensure all adults have read the risk assessments & emergency procedures prior to session
- Follow HSE Guidance on Children's play and Educational visits
- Obtain the head teachers or parents' permission for visits to the Forest School site.
- Follow the health and safety guidelines and policies.
- Undertake a comprehensive risk assessment.
- Clearly define any supervisory roles to adults and ensure all tasks have been assigned.
- Be aware of child protection issues and safeguarding policy.
- Ensure that adequate first aid provision is available and accessible at all times.
- Undertake the planning and preparation for FS visit, including briefing group members.
- Review activities as well as risk assessments and advise employees and adults of any changes
- Ensure that all adults are aware of what the visit involves.
- Safety equipment will be provided to anybody who needs it.
- Record accidents, incidents and near misses. Review whether they could have been avoided, making appropriate changes to procedures and policies.

Employees must:-

- Take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety.
- Co-operate with their employers over health and safety matters.
- Carry out activities in accordance with training, risk assessment control measures and FS policies.
- Inform the employer of any serious risks.
- Not interfere with safety equipment, such as the first aid kit, essential equipment, or protective equipment.
- Act as a reasonable parent would do in the same circumstances.
- Be aware of where the First Aid kits and emergency procedures are located.
- Employees must actively manage risks by reporting and removing the risk where it is safe to do so.
- Follow the health and safety advice given during the session by the Forest School Leader, or seek advice if uncertain

Additional Adults/Volunteers

Other adults should be clear in their roles and responsibilities. They must:

- Do their best to ensure the health and safety of themselves and everyone in the group.
- Not be left in sole charge of children. Follow the instructions of the forest school leader, help with the observation and general behaviour of the group.
- Speak to the leader if concerned about the health and safety of children at any time during the visit.
- Observe guidance given by FS leader.
- Let the FS leader know if you intend to leave the activity you are supervising or leave site.
- Not attend to the fire unless extinguishing in an emergency
- Avoid being left alone with a child
- Do not take photographs unless permitted to do so.

Children

The group leader must make it clear to children that they must:

- Follow the instructions of the leader and any other adults.
- Look out for anything which might be a threat and tell an adult about it.
- Develop an acceptable attitude towards the environment and one another

Children and young people whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to others will be reviewed. Consideration will be made to ensure the benefits of Forest School can assist the child in improving that behaviour. Our Behaviour policy will be followed happyhabitats.co.uk/behaviour-policy

Parents

The Forest School Leader should:

- Provide both written information and briefing sessions to help parents decide whether their child should go to Happy Habitats Forest School.
- Tell parents how they can help prepare their child for the visit.
- Invite parents to support Forest School sessions as a volunteer if they wish.

Parents will need to:

- Provide the FS leader with emergency contact numbers
- Sign a consent form
- Give the FS leader information about the child's emotional, psychological and physical health.

The full Health and Safety Policy Statement of **Happy Habitats** can be found at:

www.happyhabitats.co.uk/healthandsafety

Safeguarding Children Policy

Happy Habitats has a duty by law and as a responsible organisation, to take reasonable care of children and vulnerable adults who participate in our activities at Forest School.

Happy Habitats aims to adopt the highest possible standards and take all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

The term safeguarding is used to define actions taken to protect children and vulnerable groups from harm. This harm might come from adults or other children.

It is the responsibility of Angie Cruse for safeguarding at Happy Habitats and we are committed to ensure all members of the Forest School staff and volunteers understand what safeguarding is and why it's important. We are committed to ensuring that strict recruitment procedures are in operation and employees provide a DBS check. Volunteers will not be left unsupervised.

Through the long-term process of Forest Schools, we aim to build trust and meaningful relationships between the adults and the children. Therefore, disclosures can be more likely. In the event of a disclosure, any members of the team who finds themselves with children telling them something which concerns them, will follow these steps:

- Listen, without interrupting, especially if the child is talking freely
- If questions are needed to clarify the situation, ask simple open-ended questions so not to influence the communication.
- Remember that we must not promise to keep a secret.
- All team members must report to the designated senior person immediately and provide a written report to hand over to the agency.
- The team members responsibility in terms of referring concerns ends at this point, but they may have a future role in terms of supporting or monitoring the child, contributing to an assessment or implementing child protection plans.

Happy Habitats will provide a framework for inter-agency communication and effective liaison. Happy Habitats is fully committed to meeting the requirements of safeguarding so that children and vulnerable adults can enjoy the opportunities to develop their full potential.

Please see our full Safeguarding policy at www.happyhabitats.co.uk/safeguarding

Inclusion Policy

Happy Habitats actively promotes the inclusion of all children and adults into Forest School sessions.

We will ensure that the opportunities for participation are available to everyone, irrespective of race, gender, ability*, religion, sexual orientation or age.

- Inclusion is part of the Happy Habitats ethos which runs through all of the activities at Forest School
- Forest school is child led and enables children to develop their independent learning skills at their own pace.
- Using reflection, we talk about how we feel and our emotions. We learn how to be aware of who we are.
- Forest School activities encourage children to work together and trust each other. This develops social skills, how to share resources and confidence to try new things.
- Story telling allows us to share historical cultures, practices and beliefs.
- We give all participants of Forest School the time and space to learn and enjoy activities in a way that is appropriate and individual to them.
- Every child will be valued, enjoyed and celebrated.
- Discrimination will always be challenged, and intervention will be considered if a child has been excluded from play by another child.
- Activities and resources are accessible for all*. We will offer a range of sizes of tools, seating and things to be active on. (* Please note, access in this woodland is limited for wheelchairs and for our woodland walks. In some cases, with help we can overcome this obstacle. Otherwise we will look to arrange group sessions that cater directly for limited mobility. We would like to discuss the options to have a more hands on approach where required, this may require more staff)

First Aid & Emergency Procedures

First Aid Kit

1 x Waterproof portable belt First Aid Kit (P) carried by leader (First Aid essentials from below list)

2 x full First Aid Kits found in FS vehicle (V) and shed (S)

- 1 x roll of Celox gauze fabric dressing for catastrophic bleeds (V)
- 1 x Swat-T Tourniquet(V)
- 1 x Emergency Bandage (Israeli Bandage) (V)
- 3 x Compression Bandages (V,S,P)
- 6 x 20ml ampoules of sterile eye and wound wash's (V,S,P)
- 20 x various sized plasters (V,S,P)
- 6 x Various sized wound dressings (V,S,P)
- 2 x finger bandages (V,S)
- 2 eye dressings (V,S)
- 1 x Medical shears (V)
- 2 x Emergency safety whistles (S,P)
- 3 x rescue blankets (V,S)
- 1 x face shield (V)
- 3 x pairs of nitrile powder-free gloves



1 x Burns Kit located in Shed.

Inc. Burnshield dressing, finger dressing, 2 x burns blott sachets, conforming bandage, Hydrogel.

1 x Welfare Pack located in shed.

Contains: Tweezers, scissors, safety pins, cotton wool, sanitary pads, wet wipes, hand sanitizer

In case of a medical emergency

- **Stop all activities** – Whilst the team leader remains with casualty, all tools will be put down, activities stopped, and a member of the team will bring everyone to base. All staff to assemble for further instructions. One member of the team will remain with children and vulnerable adults within the circle, to keep the group calm and explain the situation if needed.
- **Assess the situation** and casualty/ies, Make the area as safe as possible.
- Give first aid as and when appropriate using portable first aid kit, another member of the team is to collect full first aid kits from vehicle and shed.
- **Get help** – If emergency services are needed Phone 999 and specify the service required (ambulance / air ambulance / fire / police). Using the risk assessment, give the location including the postcode or grid-reference. Give a brief description of the nature of the emergency, when it occurred and the condition of any casualties.
- **Deal with the group situation** – Continue giving first aid to casualties as required, make them as comfortable as possible and monitor their condition until medical help arrives. Keep all participants in the wood calm and happy. Report to School/parents and arrange transport.
- **Contact** – School and Parents will be called to arrange for pick up.
- **Safe until collected** – All children and vulnerable adults will remain with us until collected.

In case of a Fire



1. If a fire becomes out of control and attempts to extinguish it have failed, Angie Cruse or the Forest School leader will find a secure spot that allows for an easy exit of the woods, blow the whistle and call the "Urgent, Walk to me" instruction.
2. All adults and children to down tools immediately and follow instruction.
3. The Forest School leader will appoint a member of the team to collect the morning sweep risk assessment with emergency contacts, location details and register. (if safe to do so) If not, Happy Habitats phone contains all info. Emergency contacts also in vehicle.
4. Immediately call 999 for the Fire brigade.
5. Clearly give nature of emergency and the "woodland setting" information. State location by both postcode and grid reference.
6. Adults will walk children to safe emergency meeting point in the Car park, south of the woodland by the gates.
7. School and Parents will be called to arrange for pick up.
8. All children and vulnerable adults will remain with us until collected.

In case of a missing person



- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff are to inform Angie Cruse/ Forest School leader in charge.
- A headcount is carried out to ensure that no other child is missing.
- If all participants are not accounted for, our Forest School 'call to return' is sounded 3 times. Children are taught at Forest School this is a 'must show yourself' call to action.
- Angie Cruse or the person in charge will nominate as many adults as possible to thoroughly search the Forest School area and one adult to sit with all other Forest School participants.

Adequate supervision

Whilst keeping children and vulnerable adults calm and happy so not to create panic, questions will be asked to determine the length of time the child has been missing, last point they were seen and any potential direction (if not already established). A normal routine will be maintained as much as possible.

The Search

- Search techniques will start with the point the child was last seen (LKP) and obvious places.
- If still not found, search and rescue (SAR) methods will be immediately instructed to adults in the search team. Methods will depend on the child's last know position. These will move outwards using either grid search or choke point search techniques. All easily instructed, whilst maintaining good practice and ensures time efficiency.
- At this point the police will be called by the team leader, followed by parents and school, using the reporting form as good clear guidance.
- All staff will be extra vigilant to any suspicious behaviour or persons in and around the Forest School grounds.

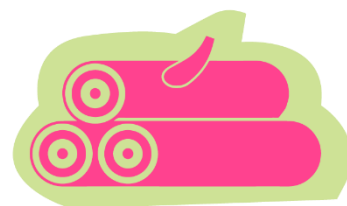
Angie Cruse will write an incident report for the authorities detailing:

- The date and time of the report
- The adults & children who were in attendance.
- When the child was last seen/ The estimated time the child went missing.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened

The incident is then passed to the authorities with our full cooperation.
All Children to go home with parents or back to school by arranged transport.
All children will be with designated responsible adult until collected.

Risk Benefit Policy

Nature has no rules, no instructions but infinite possibilities...



Nature is a dynamic environment, varying day to day, season to season & year to year. Whilst the forest may be less tidy and more unpredictable than a home or playground, this complex natural environment triggers imagination, creativity and helps a child's resilience when encountering difficulties. Gaining a dynamic approach to problem solving in the future.

Among the trees and flora, dead wood and leaf litter are essential components of a healthy woodland ecosystem. Yet we can play on the healthy soil, kick about the leaves, find the unusual & ignite the imagination with a simple fallen stick

The experience of learning in a natural environment realises so many benefits that a more orderly/sterile and manmade environment cannot. Whilst Forest School helps to build resilience, confidence, the value of our natural resources and care for the environment, enjoying nature bears some risks. In most cases the benefit of experiencing these risks outweighs the risk itself.

The below assessment is to demonstrate our commitment to prevent/minimise the likelihood of any consequences but also explains the benefits and why we explore and participate in these activities.

In a risk assessment, the following rules apply:

- Identifying what can harm people in our woodland environment.
- Identifying who might be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks and decide on the appropriate controls.
- We must record our risk assessment
- We will review and update our assessment every year or where a new situation occurs.

Our risk/benefit assessment is reviewed once every 6 months but updated periodically when changes or additions to activities are made. A safety sweep/check list is carried out every morning when trail cameras are turned off and footage retrieved.

Risk Benefit Assessment

Activities or circumstances that affect a child or vulnerable adult when participating in Forest School. (For adults, volunteers & staff, see H&S policy)

Activity/ circums- tance	Benefit	Hazard	Likel i- hood	Conseque- nce	Control measures
Running	Freedom to roam, explore. Exercise.	Uneven Ground. Hidden sticks and stumps	Medium to High	Slips trips and falls. Potential sprains or small cuts and grazes	We get use to terrain from day one. Running only permitted in flat clear areas. We have a take your time attitude.
Climbing trees	Learning capacity for adventure, durability, find out own limitations and desire to be athletic.	Slip or fall from height	Low to medium as activity is limited	Medium to High. Could cause sprains, or at worst broken bones.	Climbing is only permitted with adult attending & up to 2m. Adults are close enough to assist a fall but far enough to allow for a sense of achievement. Climbing trees is not permitted in bad weather. Only 2 trees are climbable.
Fire building	Learn survival skills and when to take necessary risk. How to control risk safely. How to be resourceful. Respect for natural resources	Flames if not controll- ed	Low to Medium risk as not always practicing	Medium to High. Burns of different degrees	All fire building is carried out by the FS leader unless it is an activity. Only when the FS leader is confident and the adult to child ratio is 1 adult to 2 participants. All leaders will be trained in fire building safety measures and understand the policies and procedures.
Cooking	Creativity, Survival skills Resourcefulness Warmth and enjoyment. Group participation	Forgetti- ng to use fire gloves, hot oil, uncontrol lled heat. Flames. Food Hygiene and allergies	Medium	Burns & scolds. Food allergies & sickness.	Cooking snacks only takes place when a fire is assessed to be controlled & stable. Cooking will be supervised by staff with a level 2 food hygiene certificate. Toasting sticks are approx. 60cm long and fire-retardant gloves worn if touching pots or pans. A 1 adult to 3 participant ratio is followed. All procedures are taught and followed. Adults have read & understood our policies & emergency procedures.
Whittling & Tool use	Learning the value of crafted useful items as well as manufactured items. Also the	Sharp knives & saws, mis-use of tools inc	Medium	Bleeds from cuts on hands & body, bruises & breakages of fingers	All staff and volunteers are to understand our Safe use of tool policies & procedures. All participants are taught how to use tools before

	raw materials used. Learning how to be inventive & resourceful	mallets, billhooks & froes. Tools not placed back in storage			use. Participants will be supervised by a 1 adult to 2 participant ratio. All tools accounted for.
Rope swings	Freedom of play, design and engineering when making swing. Sense of adventure	Equipment failure Branch break Falls	Medium	Sprains and breaks from falls and impact	Location and surrounds are checked, health of tree and branch are checked. Making of swing is supervised and checked by adult in front of group.
Hammocks	Tranquil, resting behaviour only.	Falls, trapped fingers/limbs	Low to minimal	Bumps and bruises. Sore fingers.	Children will be helped into hammocks unless confident. Children will ask for help getting out. Hammocks set at 2ft height from ground
Art & Crafts	Creativity, artistic skills	No hazards different from home. Missing child.	Minimal	Staining of clothes & fingers. Child wondering off	Participants carry out crafts in a group circle and are accompanied if they want to find more natural materials. Parents told that clothes can be stained.
Outdoor Games	Joining in, trust in others, inclusion, shared fun & exercise. Creating of games with simple materials	Falling from low heights & tumbles.	Low	Slips trips and falls. Potential sprains or small cuts and grazes	These games are fully inclusive and build trust in each other. Adults offer guidance and play a part in the games.
Woodland Walks	Learning about the natural environment. Adventure & discovery.	Uneven ground, small ditches, bramble. Poisonous plants and wildlife poop	Low	Trips, slips and falls. Poisonous plant digestion, allergies. Wildlife faeces.	We have a take your time policy. Leaders always in front, middle & behind group. We carry a first aid kit. We have already participated in plant ID activities & removed poisonous plants where noted. Children are taught about wildlife poo and what wildlife eat.
Wildlife habitat walks	Learning about our native wildlife, how they live & respect for other species.	Wildlife poop, uneven ground, small ditches, bramble.	Low	Trips, slips and falls. Poisonous plant digestion, allergies. Wildlife faeces.	As above
Free Play	Encouraging imaginative ideas. Allows adults to assess happiness and	Trips, slips and falls, Missing children.	Low to medium	Slips trips and falls. Potential sprains or small cuts and grazes.	This is a time of observation by leaders. Adults step in if a safety issue arises or boundaries are being overstepped. Adults will stop and listen

	needs of a child from a distance.	Eating poisonous plants.		Inclusion issues	if a child looks distant from play. Children are to follow a “no eat policy”
Plant ID activities. Foraging & gathering	Learning about the use of plants, edible & poisonous plants.	A child being too curious or mistaken	Low to minimal	Trips, slips and falls. Curiosity of poisonous plant digestion, allergies. Wildlife faeces.	The activity itself is teaching children to understand differences, uses and any consequences of our woodland plants. All adults are observing what children pick up. We have a no pick and lick policy.
Building shelters	Survival techniques, resourcefulness and building ability. Sense of Achievement. Ultimately keep dry and somewhere to relax! Team building.	Lifting, climbing & tripping. Mallet use.	Low	Strains from lifting, trips over guide ropes, splinters from wood pegs. Hands caught under mallet. Falls from activity	The woodland floor is mostly soft and easy to peg shelters. Children are taught to carry heavier items than a stick by sharing the weight with others. Use of mallets are limited but participants are taught to have hands clear in our safe use of tools policy.
Forest School in bad/ Winter weather	Resilience and learning the importance of shelter and warmth	Cold or damp weather, Danger of being hit by windblown branches. Shelter collapsing	Medium	Get sick from feeling cold or damp. Unhappy & frustrated. Bruises and breakages from windblown branches	Forecast are scrutinised the day before and on the morning of forest school. In extreme weather, an informed decision whether or not to cancel forest school will be taken. Mostly due to high winds. If Forest school continues, the leader will check shelter prior to the day starting and build a fire in advance. Children's clothing will be checked to ensure it is adequate and more provided where necessary or participant may be asked to stay at home
Forest School in hot/dry summer weather	Learning how to embrace the warmth safely and use shade to keep cool. Woodlands provide good shelter from sun.	Woodland fire. Participants feeling heat stroke.	Minimal due to shady environment.	Environmental impact of a fire. Children will need to be evacuated.	No fires built in hot/dry weather. No items used that can cause fire such as magnifying glass. More water kept close by. Sun cream advised with parents and provided by us if needed. Evacuation procedures will be followed in unlikely event. The woodland has a no smoking policy.

Clothing & Kit List for Forest School

What the participant brings

Each participant will need a small backpack, (Marked with name)
Filled water bottle (with your choice of drink and marked with name)
Cup suitable for hot drinks. (Marked with name)
A packed lunch and snack (we will occasionally provide snacks as part of an activity, such as damper bread, toffee apples, ash cakes)



2-piece waterproofs are provided for members of Happy Habitats Forest School, if you are not yet a full member, you may need to supply these.

Spring/Autumn



Comfy durable trousers which you don't mind getting muddy. (we will likely kneel on floor)
One top, long or short sleeved depending on weather.
At least one warm jumper or fleece.
2 pairs of socks, (at least one set of warm socks and one in backpack)
Wellies or walking boots (which you don't mind getting wet and muddy!)
Spare trousers in backpack (plus underwear if toilet training)

Summer

Comfy trousers which you don't mind getting muddy. (we will likely kneel on floor)
One top, long or short sleeved depending on weather.
One warm jumper or fleece.
2 pairs of socks, (one in backpack)
Wellies for playing in the stream



Spare trousers in backpack (plus underwear if toilet training)
Sun hat
Sun cream & insect repellent in back pack if you have a preference. (we recommend applying before forest school)

Winter

Comfy warm trousers which you don't mind getting muddy (we will likely kneel on floor)
Base layers - thermals
One top, long sleeved
1 warm jumper.
1 zip up fleece or similar that can be worn over jumper
Warm coat
2 pairs of warm woolly socks, (one in back pack)
Wellies or warm winter walking/snow boots that you don't mind getting wet and muddy
Spare shoes (if wearing walking boots & they get wet)
Spare warm trousers in backpack (plus underwear if toilet training)
Warm scarf
Warm hat and gloves



Behaviour and participation policy

Good and helpful behaviour is positively encouraged at Happy Habitats Forest School, with much emphasis on courtesy and consideration for others and the environment.

We recognise that children respond well to praise and encouragement and therefore we use it freely to promote good behaviour.

We will also prevent bullying by reinforcing our inclusion policy and ethos, in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable.

Happy Habitats (& our FS leaders) aim is to:

- Develop an awareness of acceptable behaviour in an outdoor environment.
- Encourage participants to take pride in their everyday activities & develop a sense of pride in their achievements.
- Build on self-esteem, independence and motivation.
- Reinforce collaborative behaviour
- Promote awareness of other people's feelings, respect and care for each other.
- Have a consistent approach to expectations at Forest School.
- Create a positive & Happy environment to encourage caring, nurturing and helpful behaviour
- Place the needs of the children first.
- Provide positive role models for children and volunteers.
- Promote effective relationships in which all are accepted, valued and treated equally.
- We end each day on a positive.

For the environment we will:

- Promote respect for equipment, tools and their maintenance.
- We always place a high value on our surrounding environment.
- We provide activities to understand & encourage sustainable living
- We practice a no litter policy & offer a 'leave no trace' experience.
- We demonstrate conservation and good practice in a natural environment. (eg, not to damage vegetation unnecessarily & use sustainably sourced materials)

The participants/children will:

- Listen carefully and always follow instructions concerning safety.
- Develop an acceptable attitude towards the environment and one another.
- Pick up their litter.
- Be helpful to one another.
- Stay within the Forest School boundary.

If action is required, the following steps may be taken:

- Re-engage the child into Forest School activities
- Talk to the child and remind them of the importance of acceptable behaviour and what we are trying to aim for.
- Give the child time away from the activities to reflect.
- If the behaviour continues more than 3 times, the child's parents will be informed.
- If behaviour continues during 3 sessions, or the behaviour places them or other children at risk, a letter will inform parents and the child will miss one or more future sessions.

If a child's actions are consistently placing themselves or others in danger, the following will happen:

- Parents will be invited for a chat with the Forest School Leader, as to how they may be solved and try to offer a fresh start.
- Where unsafe behaviour cannot be resolved, the child will need to be excluded from Forest School sessions.
- Where behaviour has affected the safety of others, an incident report will be completed by the Forest School leader and retained on file for either the parent or school to consider further action.

Accidents and mistakes happen.....

Participants will never be put down or chastised over accidents. Instead we will encourage a more confident approach by discussing what went wrong and demonstrating a better way of doing things.

**We are confident in making a connection with every child
and vulnerable adult who participate here at
Happy Habitats.**

We look forward to their adventures in nature.....

Complaints Procedure

We understand that from time to time, expectations may not have been met, or a child's wants and needs haven't been clearly picked up on. There may also be issues with staff that need our attention.

Happy Habitats recognises that a willingness to listen to concerns/criticism and to respond positively, can lead to improvements in Forest School practices.

Any complaint against Happy Habitats Forest School will be dealt with in a fair, open and responsive way, with the aim of achieving a speedy and satisfactory resolution.

- 1) In the first instance we ask you to discuss the matter with Angie Cruse, owner and Forest School leader. (Informal)
- 2) Follow up your complaint to us in writing to angie@happyhabitats.co.uk (Formal)

- We will encourage resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible.
- We will be easily accessible.
- The complaint and response will be simple to understand.
- We will be impartial.
- We will handle the matter swiftly with a time-limit for action & keep people informed of progress.
- We will ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary.
- Clarify what the complainant feels would put things right.
- We will respect people's needs for confidentiality.
- We will address all the points and provide an effective response.
- We will provide a full report so that services can be improved.
- An explanation will be given of the steps that have been taken to ensure that it will not happen again.

Likewise, kind words and compliments mean everything to us, please feel free to write them down and let us know how we are doing!

Parent letters and consent forms

Dear Parent

Happy Habitats Forest School is situated within our own ancient woodland to give children the opportunity of experiencing the natural world with all its benefits of health, vitality, adventure and endless discovery.

As explained in our handbook, the natural environment also comes with some risk attached and our handbook demonstrates how we aim to mitigate those risks as much as possible. We invite you to read the handbook and accompanying policies to ensure you are happy with our strategies in place. We want to know if you are entirely comfortable with those risks, and how we aim to reduce them to an acceptable level for your child. Therefore, we ask you to provide written consent on the form at the end of this letter to allow your child to participate at our Forest School.

Forest School is the name for an approach to educating children in the outdoors on a regular basis. This work has strong emphasis on raising children's self-esteem and independence. If you are looking for further reading on Forest School and its benefits to society, I recommend a report written by Stephen Moss commissioned by the National Trust called Natural Childhood. The document encourages a great discussion for all who are interested to get involved.

Part of the Forest School experience is that children will be active in the outdoors in all weathers, with the exception of very high winds & thunderstorms. Although we provide shelter, please assume that your child will be outside when they take part at Forest School. To ensure this is possible for all participants, we provide waterproof coats and waterproof trousers. We do however, ask you to supply the items of clothing in the kit list provided in the handbook. Please bear in mind that on occasions your child is likely to get muddy as our Forest School programme operates all year round.

If you have any questions about Happy Habitats Forest School, please feel free to call me on 07795 314814 or email angie@happyhabitats.co.uk and I will be happy to help you.

We thank you for your interest during this exciting time for your child.

Yours faithfully

Angie Cruse

Parental Consent Form

Childs name

Parent/s or Carers full name/s

Home address

Email address

Contact telephone in case of emergency:

Home/work..... Mobile.....

Name and address of family doctor

Phone.....

Does you child have any of the following:

(Please tick)

Asthma or bronchitis	YES	NO
Sight or hearing disabilities	YES	NO
Heart condition	YES	NO
Fits, fainting or blackouts	YES	NO
Severe headaches	YES	NO
Diabetes	YES	NO
Allergies to any drugs	YES	NO
Any other allergies, e.g. material, food, Medicine, pollen, dust? (details can be given below)	YES	NO
Other illnesses	YES	NO
Any disabilities	YES	NO
Sleep walking	YES	NO
Travel sickness	YES	NO
Does your son/daughter have any special dietary requirements?	YES	NO
Is your child up to date with their Tetanus vaccinations	YES	NO

If the answer to any of the above is YES, please give details below, (including details of medication or special diet)

All medication for any of the above conditions need to be on the Forest School site with your child at all times.

In an emergency, we will always try to contact parents and families prior to any hospital treatment needed.

Is there any medical attention you would NOT like your child to receive, or anything that we should make a hospital aware of?

- 1) As the parent/carer of the child named above, I have read, fully understood and am satisfied with the details supplied regarding Forest School activities and agree for my child to take part in them.
- 2) I also understand that the use of tools such as craft knives, mallets and saws may be used and that they will eventually learn how to make a fire that they can use to cook on.
- 3) I know of no medical reason why my child should not participate.
- 4) In the event of a minor accident, I agree for first aid to be administered by a qualified First Aider.

SIGNED DATE

NAME.

Relation to child