



# WILDLINGS HANDBOOK

ACCOMPANIED FOREST SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

WILDLINGS DEMPSEY AND WILDLINGS COASTAL PLAYGROVE

# CONTENTS

WELCOME .....	3
INTRODUCTION TO FOREST SCHOOL .....	4
THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF FOREST SCHOOL (FS) .....	4
EXAMPLES OF HOW WE FOSTER HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT AT FOREST SCHOOL.....	6
EMOTIONAL WEALTH .....	7
BLACKWELL'S GROWTH CYCLE.....	9
THE ROLE OF YOUR FOREST SCHOOL LEADER .....	10
WHAT TO EXPECT AT FOREST SCHOOL.....	12
LOCATIONS.....	13
PROGRAMME .....	15
CONDUCT GUIDELINES (FOR ADULTS) .....	16
ADVERSE WEATHER .....	17
WHAT TO WEAR .....	19
OTHER GEAR.....	19
PRAMS AND CAR SEATS.....	20
COMMUNICATION.....	21



# WELCOME

*Thank you for choosing a Wildlings Forest School Programme. We are delighted to be welcoming you into our growing community.*

*We run our Forest School programmes at our private Forest School site in Dempsey, in Singapore's wonderful natural spaces and we run programmes for schools and clubs with their own private nature spaces. True to the globally successful Forest School (FS) approach, our programmes provide opportunities for our learners to shine with the brilliance of their achievements and experience the wonder of the natural world, to actively participate in their learning and develop independence, confidence, resilience and creativity.*

*In this handbook you will find all of the information that you will need to be able to take part in our Accompanied Forest School sessions for children and the adults that care for them. In these sessions we will learn together, connect with each other and nature, and create a wonderful and rich environment for our younger learners.*

*Please read this handbook before your first session and we'll be happy to discuss this with you and any questions that you may have when we meet you in the forest.*

*Warmest Regards,*

*Claire*

CLAIRE SEABROOK | MENVSCI | ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATOR | FOREST SCHOOL LEADER

FOUNDER OF WILDLINGS



Claire Seabrook  
Accredited to  
**Level 3**  
Practitioner Award  
[www.forestschoools.com](http://www.forestschoools.com)



# INTRODUCTION TO FOREST SCHOOL

## THE SIX PRINCIPLES OF FOREST SCHOOL (FS)



FS is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning and preparation, observation, reflection and review, and adaptation links each session.



FS uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.



FS promotes the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.



FS offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.



FS takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.



FS is run by qualified practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

These six principles of Forest School underpin all our programmes. True to Forest School, our programmes are dynamic and in tune with the unique state of each participant. We continually plan our sessions, observe our learners during sessions and adapt as necessary, we reflect and review each session before planning the next one. You as parents and carers can contribute to this process, your feedback on your child helps us to plan experiences which will be of most interest and benefit to them.

During every Forest School session we provide experiences and invite the learners to participate. Learners can choose which experiences they are interested in, or they can simply explore on their own terms and the Leader or other accompanying adults will be there to support them. We respect their choice and delight in their confidence to direct their own learning. We have processes and rituals and a set of experiences which are similar each session which help to define the learner's time at Forest School and provide a sense of belonging.



Forest School develops children holistically. To FS Practitioners this means socially, physically, intellectually, linguistically, emotionally and spiritually/culturally and examples of how we do this are included later in this document and on our website. Over time, Forest School can be an integral part of a person's life experiences which build character, healthy beliefs and values and a passion for learning throughout their lives.

At Forest School we support our learners to take supported risks which are appropriate for them and the environment in which they are in. Nature provides opportunities for risky play every session such as jumping off boulders or sliding down slopes. We also provide the opportunity for children to take emotional risks, such as coming forward at the start of class to hang their wooden disc on the tree, or to participate in class by answering questions in the circle setting. Taking appropriate supported risks builds confidence and judgement.

One of the things that makes Forest School both unique and necessary is that all this occurs in nature. Nature is a classroom without boundary walls. There are abundant loose parts and endless possibilities. Its mysteries inspire and fire the imagination and create a rich environment for learning. Nature provides an antidote to the toxicity of the urban environment and boundless studies show the benefits of nature exposure to mental and physical wellbeing.

All our programmes are planned by the Forest School Level 3 (FSL3) qualified leader in charge of that group of learners. Our Leaders are all degree educated or experienced in early and primary years, often parents themselves, and display the judgement and maturity needed to take care of children in the outdoors. All our leaders and assistants hold a relevant first aid qualification. We are part of a wider network of practitioners continually working to grow the Forest Schools movement globally.

# EXAMPLES OF HOW WE FOSTER HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT AT FOREST SCHOOL



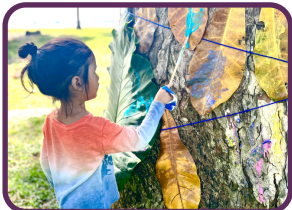
## Social

- The group is the same each term, and ideally for longer, allowing for strong bonds to grow
- We actively encourage the children and adults to get to know each other
- There are plenty of opportunities for shared experiences on which we reflect together at the end of each activity
- We encourage appropriate social verbal and non-verbal communication through gentle guidance and plenty of opportunities to practice.



## Physical

- We provide experiences which develop fine motor skills
- We provide experiences which develop gross motor skills such as playing hunting games and nature yoga
- We have the opportunity to move as much as we want to at FS, nature provides a rich variety of movement opportunities
- During mindfulness we practice keeping our bodies and minds still and calm
- Reflection on our experiences, either through repetition, questioning, or dedicated reflection time, embeds the learning.
- The natural elements such as sunlight and fresh air are good for our bodies



## Intellectual

- We invite the children to question and to think and to solve their own problems
- New knowledge is accompanied by hands on experiences which create meaning and memories
- We let the learners show us what they are interested in, we take this on board when planning the experiences we will bring along to sessions
- We use education best practice but Forest School is not curriculum driven
- We consider playing to be learning, we'll happily abandon any prepared experiences and go with the flow
- We seek to challenge each individual at the right level to maintain engagement and interest



## Communication

- We practice listening to each other
- We tell the same story for each term to really engage the children in the story
- We will ask questions and invite input from the children during circle time
- Children are encouraged to talk to adults, adults are encouraged to talk respectfully to children
- We believe in the right of the individual to communicate on their terms when they are ready
- We provide experiences which encourage confident and appropriate body language



## Emotional

- We encourage self-awareness through reflection and we build the interests of the individual learners into the programme so that their motivation is encouraged
- We talk about our feelings and the feelings of others, we talk about our actions and the impact of these actions on others
- We take the time to be calm and quiet
- We work on our meaningful person-to-person relationships through working in pairs and groups
- We provide children with the opportunity to develop their confidence through exposure to gentle emotional 'risk'



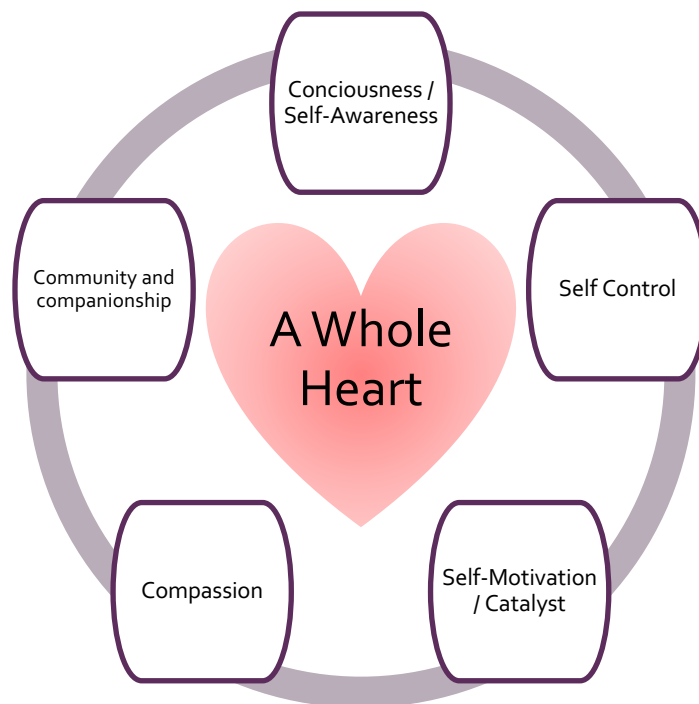
## Spiritual/Cultural

- We spend time being mindful each session
- We thank nature, and each other, because we are grateful
- We allow ourselves to marvel at the wonders of the natural world instead of letting them pass us by, we take the time to stop, observe, and learn more
- We allow ourselves to engage in the magic and mysterious
- We link our sessions to history and culture, customs and traditions



# EMOTIONAL WEALTH

At Forest School, we are interested in the self-esteem and emotional wellbeing of our participants. There are five elements of emotional wealth which Forest School can influence, and our programmes are designed to foster. Once these elements are in place for an individual, they are more likely to have what we call a 'whole and healthy heart', where their hearts are filled through their many and varied life experiences, their motivations and achievements, meaningful positive interactions with the important people in their lives and their sense of self-worth.



Here are some examples of how Forest School influences emotional wealth:

1. Consciousness / self-awareness: We observe our participants, we listen, we question, and we reflect, and through this we help our learners to develop a behavior of thoughtful reflection which will help them to better understand themselves and as a result, make better choices in life.
2. Self-control: Through taking the time to be calm and quiet each session we practice calming our minds and bodies which is a useful skill in stressful times. We observe and acknowledge emotions and their role within our lives rather than burying them. We ask questions about emotions, helping our participants to understand them and decide on the best response.
3. Self-motivation / Catalyst: As FS Leaders we are continually seeking the things that really make our participants spark and shine and love to learn more. Is it fairies and the fantastic? Is it building anything and everything using whatever we can find? Is it exploring, climbing, jumping, or running feeling free to choose our own path? It may take some time, it's a process of planning, doing,

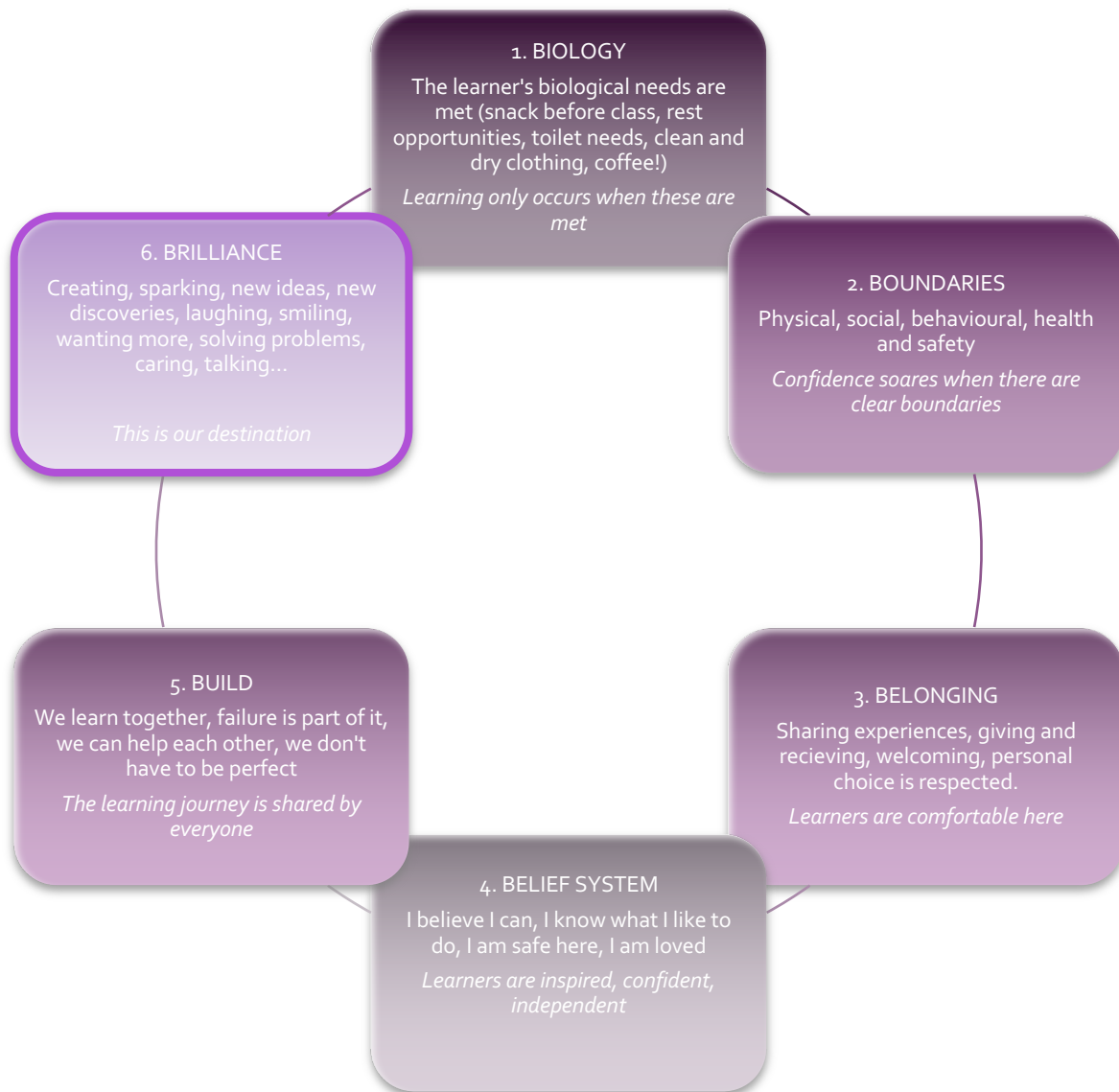
reflecting and adapting but eventually we'll find things that really ignite the imagination. You will already know some of the things that your child loves to do, we'll incorporate these in your programme, but we will seek to find new things too.

4. Compassion: At Forest School, with the help of accompanying adults, we take care of basic needs (see Blackwell's Growth Cycle below) and help to deal with emotions so that participants have more space to notice the impact that they are having on those around them. This is an essential skill to have as it helps us to get along with people in life. We observe, and say what we see, which helps the participants to take notice of what is occurring in the moment and to consider others. In addition to this, at Forest School we consider our impact on the environment. We think about the positive and negative impact we can have.
5. Community and Companionship: Our FS regular sessions, excursions and special events are designed to develop meaningful person-to-person relationships between those who attend. They help to create what we call our community for learning. We encourage FS activities to extend beyond our sessions, for example, children may be given seeds to grow at home, or a flower press to preserve flowers and leaves that they find. Our FS participants, both young and older, begin to find common interests and values through plenty of time to play and socialize as well as through guided activities run by the FS Leader.



# BLACKWELL'S GROWTH CYCLE

Designed by Sarah Blackwell, Founder of Forest Schools Education, the Blackwell growth cycle describes the elements of our Forest School programmes which together lead to our goal to help our participants shine with the brilliance of their achievements and experiences.



# THE ROLE OF YOUR FOREST SCHOOL LEADER

"Teaching, in my estimation, is a vastly overrated function.... I see the *facilitation of learning* as the aim of education".

— **Carl Rogers, Freedom to Learn, 1969**

A Wildlings' Forest School leader has completed endless hours of study, gained significant practical experience, passed a rigorous practical assessment to demonstrate their competency and completed 20 hours of first aid training before being able to plan and lead your Forest School session.

The role of the Forest School Leader is complex, they:

- Protect the authenticity of the Forest School ethos.
- Help accompanying adults to immerse themselves in the Forest School experience and model the behaviour we are seeking from our younger learners.
- Embody the role of a life-long learner, unafraid to fail and learn, try new things which may or may not work, reflect on experiences and improve for the future, and ultimately find the learning points throughout this continuous journey.
- Introduce new experiences to help participants in a Forest School session find the things that interest them and that they love to do and build on these interests throughout the Forest School experience.
- Observe all of the learners and reflect on each session, consult with parents and build a picture of the needs of the participants in a session. These are then taken into consideration when session planning, and each session evolves week by week in response to these ever-changing needs.
- Offer each learner compassion, understanding, and friendship, acting to fill the hearts of each child through kindness, positive messages, instilling a growth-mindset, supporting them to build confidence and challenge them to develop resilience, emotional intelligence and to master new things.
- Go as far as possible to ensure that people are safe during their Forest School sessions. This is undertaken through a process of risk assessments, risk management actions, and regular awareness raising, following procedures and adhering to policies.
- Manage the nature spaces and the resources that they need for the experiences that they would like to provide in their sessions.

As well as listing what the Forest School Leader is, it is equally important to list what the Forest School leader is not, or not able to do:

- Guarantee safety 100%. We use managed natural environments for our sessions, and these are ever changing and include an element of unpredictability.
- Be with your child 100% of the time. A Forest School Leader may have 10 children and 10 accompanying adults in your session and their time and attention will be split amongst many tasks at any one time. This is partly why accompanying adults are so important to the success of the Forest School programme, we all get stuck in and have a go together and create the community which is so important to the experience.
- Plan a session purely to meet your child's needs. All sessions take into account the needs of the whole group, however, certain activities will be designed to help a specific identified need, this will also be relevant and enjoyable for the rest of the group.
- Forest School is *Learner-centred, play-based, long-term and within a wooded area*, your Leader can-not compromise these key elements that define Forest School in any way.



# WHAT TO EXPECT AT FOREST SCHOOL



Water play



Connecting with nature



Rain or shine sessions



Campfires and outdoor cooking



Plenty of nature arts and crafts



Shelter building



Get wet, messy and fire all the senses



Rest and relax



Story and circle time



Meaningful friendships



Using tools safely



Exploring and chances to be brave



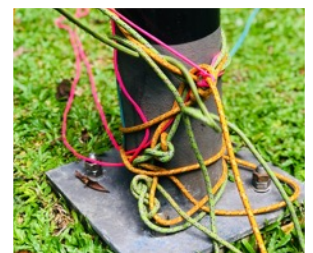
Risky play



Fantasy and role play



Spiritual and cultural experiences



Knots and outdoor skills

# LOCATIONS

*"An old Indian saying: 'It's better to know one mountain than to climb many'"*

— Richard Louv, **Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder**

We choose our locations with great care. The choice of location is fundamental to the quality of experiences available to our young learners. We also consider accessibility, safety, amenities and legal restrictions when choosing a location to run a full and authentic Forest School programme.

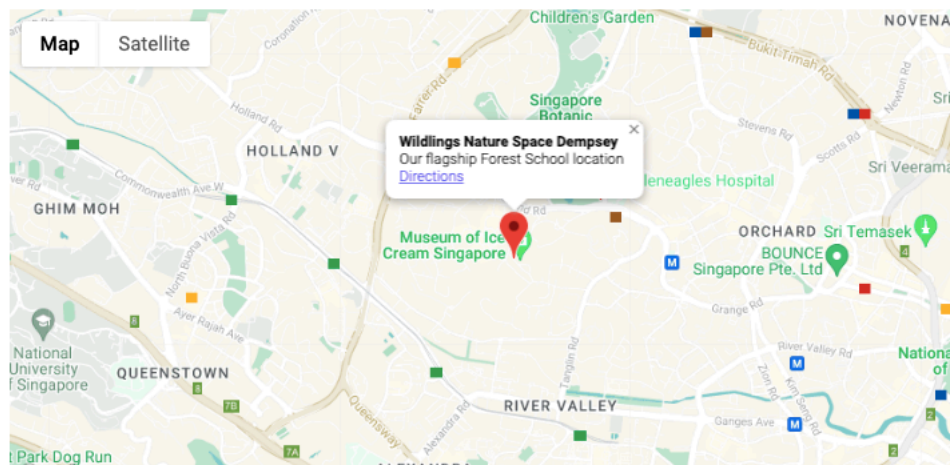
## **Wildlings Dempsey (located within the Core Collective facility)**

Wildlings Nature Space

27A Loewen Road

Singapore

248839





## Coastal Playgrove East Coast Park

### Outdoor Classroom (Meeting Place)

902 E Coast Park Service Rd,

Singapore

449874



# PROGRAMME

**0-15 minutes: Arrival and settling in time. Last chance to give your child a snack.**

**Welcome circle 10 minutes**

**Physical Activity 10 minutes**

*We start most sessions by getting active outdoors. This could be a game working on fundamental movement skills or an activity to learn about and connect with nature.*

**Guided Exploration 20-30 minutes**

*Your Forest School Leader will guide the group through optional experiences designed to explore a theme. Experiences will be guided by the interests of the children, the environment, and holistic development goals. There will be more than one experience for the children to choose from.*

**Free Play 20-30 minutes**

*You will be invited to continue with the experiences provided or embark on free play in the nature play space prepared for the session.*

**Tidy up and circle time 10 minutes**

*We will tidy up and gather as a group for the story of the term, a breathing or mindful exercise, and to thank the Forest.*

**Stay and Play**

*You are welcome to stay and play for up to 30 minutes after your session concludes whilst the Leader(s) pack away. You may use this time to provide your child with a snack if needed.*



# CONDUCT GUIDELINES (FOR ADULTS)

In order to deliver a programme true to the FS ethos, accompanying adults are viewed as session volunteers and part of the community for learning. Adults will need to learn a little about the ethos behind Forest Schools and how to put it into practice, just like a classroom volunteer would need to learn about a school's ways of working.

Along with the introduction to Forest Schools in this handbook and support from your Forest School Leader, here are some guidelines to keep in mind during Forest School sessions:

- Please do not use up your valuable time at Forest School with snacking. Please arrive after having met your child's biological needs so that they are ready for their session.
- View yourself as a lifelong learner together with your child. Be interested and have a go, even play along, then your child might want to too. Don't force or expect participation. Trust that a child's natural curiosity will compel them towards an activity when the time for learning is right for them or an activity is interesting for them. It can take time and that's OK.
- Wait to be asked by your child instead of offering help, and when giving help, do the least possible.
- Observe but don't intrude or offer your ideas or directions. A child may choose an unexpected path of play or creation, let's wait and see what it is and give them the time to enter into their own 'flow-state' uninterrupted.
- View conflict as an essential part of learning to be a person. Question unacceptable behavior, but intervene only when physical or significant emotional harm is likely and don't expect the FS Leader to be the right person to intervene – you know the child you are caring for best.
- Practice 'sports-casting' which is describing what you see is going on if you feel like your input is required to defuse a situation but avoid directing to let the child work things out where possible.
- Always be as safe as necessary, we do not need to be as safe as possible. Be mindful of the risks and make the choices we would like to see our children making independently. Always explain why when you say 'no' and avoid saying 'be careful' without pointing out the actual danger you have seen.
- Show the children the way to behave socially, be welcoming and communicative and demonstrate empathy and great listening skills.
- When working with or alongside your child, avoid overwhelming your young learner with your adult capabilities which may lead to unrealistic comparisons and loss of confidence. The process is more important than the final outcome, which is often unknown before an experience begins, so be willing to show your own learning journey.
- Reflect on each session and consider how learning can continue outside of the session in other parts of life.
- Feedback, this is your Forest School group, and you have a say in its design.

# ADVERSE WEATHER

*"There is no bad weather, just the wrong clothing!"*

We have made substantial upgrades to our nature space in Dempsey recently, we have installed a 63 sqm play space with a lightning protection system and we are now more weather resilient than ever before.



However, we understand that when we have thunderstorms it doesn't only affect our sessions, but it can make it more difficult for you to get to your session if you have to rely on taxis or public transport, therefore afternoon sessions at Dempsey and all sessions at East Coast may be subject to a 30 minute delay to give you more time to arrive and the weather time to ease. Our 9am session at Dempsey on Tuesdays may be cancelled, and customers are invited to attend the 10.30am or 3.30pm class instead or book an additional make-up session.

Although we are weather resilient, we are not entirely weatherproof. Persistent and extreme weather in our locations may still result in a cancellation. We therefore will follow the procedure below in the event of adverse weather. All communication is via email from your session Leader at your location.



*Figure 1 Adverse weather procedure*

Should we be experiencing unfavorable weather conditions at session start time then the meeting point for your session will change:

**Coastal Playgrove:** From Outdoor Classroom to the shelter next to the Nature Play Garden close to the drop-off point

**Dempsey:** From the front gate to the main shelter onsite – please enter when you arrive, and your Leader will be waiting for you in the safe shelter.

Should a thunderstorm strike during your session all our locations have a safe shelter to continue the session until the storm passes. We will no longer end sessions early once they have started and participants have made the effort to travel and attend.

## WHAT TO WEAR

Forest School is different from a nature walk through a nature park. Here is a list of what to dress your child in and bring:

- Long sleeved top
- Long non-restrictive trousers or leggings
- Socks, with trousers or leggings tucked in (this helps prevent ant or mosquito bites)
- Clothing which is dark in colour and inexpensive as it is likely to get ruined
- Full spare set of clothing to change into
- If your child likes to get right in when there's water (which there often is) you may want to dress them in water play clothing (rash vests, swim shorts, etc)
- Hat
- We recommend waterplay shoes for every season, available inexpensively from stores such as Decathlon. Trainers can be worn in the dry season. To prevent insect bites or cuts we always recommend closed shoes. You will find out what works best for you since we know how particular young children can be about their shoes. Shoes that are easy to get on and off are best.
- Bring spare shoes and socks for when play is done.
- A 100% waterproof rain coverall or jacket.

You may also want to consider how to dress appropriately to make yourself comfortable. We advise against nice handbags, heels, sundresses etc. and covering up skin to protect against the sun and mosquito bites. Forest School goes ahead rain or shine so a waterproof outer layer and change of clothes is just as important for you as it is for your child.

## OTHER GEAR

- Insect repellent
- Drinking water (there is a drinking water fountain outside the ladies' toilets at Core Collective)
- Towel
- Plastic bag for wet, dirty clothes
- Umbrella
- Snack for before or after your session

Decathlon will sell everything that your child needs for Forest School.



## PRAMS AND CAR SEATS

For Dempsey, prams and car seats may be left inside the gate. We recommend bringing your pram rain cover. Any babies attending with older siblings may be placed in a carrier, or if it is their nap time, the pram can be wheeled to a shelter inside.

Prams and car seats are essential for transporting your children safely to Forest School, but for our sessions held in public spaces, once you have arrived, we ask that wherever possible these items are left in cars, locked at bike racks or even hidden in the bushes until the end of the session.

This is because prams and car seats are a barrier to physical development, which is a goal of Forest School. A group of parents wheeling around prams also has a larger impact on other users of the nature park than a group on foot will have. Finally, prams tie us to the pathways, and we like to get off the beaten track.

All of our sites are however pram-friendly to a certain extent so if you must bring it with you then it is possible to do so. We also welcome carriers of all types to help with children under the age of 3 years, especially at the start of coming to Forest School and when they still need to build their stamina to see them through a whole session.

# COMMUNICATION

## **Before your programme starts:**

- You will be provided with this handbook.
- All of your booking details will have been emailed via our booking system Wix. You can check the schedule for your session in your booking details or in your booked session on our website at this link: <https://www.wildlings.sg/booking?category=473759ad-be04-4588-9864-4c8b23d75fa8>
- Please complete our [accompanied waiver](#).

## **During your programme:**

- Your session leader will have access to your booking details, including the emergency contact.
- Your session leader will use the Wix system to email any important messages to you during the term.
- Your session leader will communicate adverse weather plans via email.

## **Contacting your session leader:**

You can contact Wildlings via email:

[hello@wildlings.sg](mailto:hello@wildlings.sg)

Or WhatsApp:

+ 65 8875 5919

Phone:

+65 6349 2249

Or through our website contact page:

<https://www.wildlings.sg/contact-us>

## **Communication from Wildlings**

- Wildlings will send a regular newsletter containing information for the whole Forest School community. You can sign up to receive the newsletter at [www.wildlings.sg](http://www.wildlings.sg)
- Wildlings will produce regular blog articles on different elements relating to Wildlings and Forest School.
- In the second half of your programme you will be invited to re-book to secure your place for the next term before bookings are opened up to our waiting list or communicated to new customers.

- You will be invited to any community events that Wildlings runs on behalf of its Forest School community.

**Thank you for your support.**

**See you in the forest.**