

Woodland Adventures

Handbook



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Why Woodland Adventures?

"Outdoors is often a more effective place to learn than indoors."

Curriculum for Excellence Through Outdoor Learning (2010)

Glenwood Family Centre has been using the woodland in Eastwood Park with groups of children to extend their opportunities for outdoor learning for many years. Over time these outings have evolved from simple seasonal "Wellie Walks" to regular sessions which follow the Forest School approach.

Forest Schools originated in Sweden in the 1950s. The idea was brought to the UK in 1995 and the popularity of the approach continues to grow. Much research has been undertaken as to the benefits to children of learning outdoors, which include:

- improved motor skills - both gross and fine
- increased confidence
- development of complex social skills - self-awareness, understanding of others, cooperation
- an increase in emotional well being
- improved communication skills - language development can be promoted by sensory experiences
- increased motivation and concentration
- an increased knowledge and understanding of the natural environment

(O'Brien, L & Murray, R, 2006)

Engaging with nature also helps children to become aware of the impact of humans on the environment and how their own actions can have an effect on the health of the planet.

Our Woodland Adventures follow the ethos of Forest School:

- There are opportunities for children to take manageable risks in an environment which is not their usual one but one that is wilder and more natural.
- Our Woodland Adventures take place throughout the year, in a variety of weathers, enabling children to become familiar with the rhythms of nature and the seasons.
- Over the course of their visits, where they are supported by familiar adults, children can learn to be confident in a new space and to trust the nature around them.
- Although each session is planned, our Woodland Adventures follow the interests of the children.

We also value the importance of play in learning and recognise that different types of play can be enjoyed outside.

- Imaginative play - dramatic, symbolic, fantasy, imaginative...
- Exploratory play - exploratory, creative, object (using tools)
- Physical play - loco-motor, mastery, rough & tumble, social, deep (risky)
- Recapitulative play - accessing an earlier human evolutionary stage

(Hughes, B., 2002)



Experiences and Activities

Each session will have experiences and/ or activities that are planned for. However, if the interest of the children leads us in a different direction then this will be facilitated.

Here are a few of the things we might do on our Woodland Adventures:

- Sensorial experiences - smelly potions, touching/listening games, transient art, looking at things from a new angle...
- Finding out about the natural world - bug hunts, pond dipping, exploring the changing seasons, collecting natural objects...
- Knots – using string and rope, in our games, for making swings, dens, models...
- Using tools – scissors, mallets, whittling peelers, saws, secateurs
- Building dens and shelters – large and small...
- Making things - stickman, clay monsters, weaving, rafts, bows & arrows, magic wands...
- Playing - hide and seek, telling stories, imaginary play, climbing...

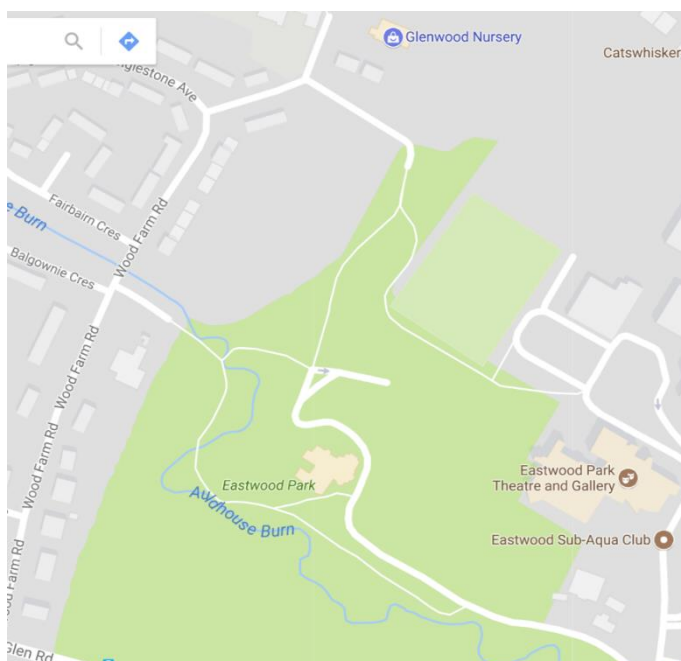
Above all, we believe our Woodland Adventures should be fun.



Location

Eastwood Park, East Renfrewshire

Our Woodland Adventures take place in the woods beside the Auldhouse Burn. As well as having our favourite places to play, we often like to explore further to see what we can find!



Children will begin their Woodland Adventure walking from Glenwood Family Centre along the footpath beside St Ninian's pitches.



Staff

Our Woodland Adventures are led by Jane Husbands, with other staff from Glenwood Family Centre also leading and joining sessions. Parents and students on placement within the centre are invited to join us on occasion.

Jane Husbands holds a Level 3 Forest School Leaders qualification.

In accordance with East Renfrewshire Policy, all staff, students and any regular helpers have current PVG certificates.

The number of supervising adults present is dependent on the group size and individual needs of the children attending the session. The adult to child ratio will be high enough to enable quality interactions between adults and children, ideally no greater than 1:5.

Parental Consent

All children who attend Glenwood Family Centre are given the opportunity to participate in Woodland Adventures and a separate consent form is completed for this.

Parental consent for use of photographs by Glenwood Family Centre is recorded in each child's personal file and this consent extends to Woodland Adventures.



Health & Safety Aspects

First Aid & Medication

A first aid kit is carried at all times on Woodland Adventures for the treatment of minor injuries. Depending on the seriousness of the incident, the parent will either be contacted immediately or informed at the end of the session. In the case of a head bump, the parent will be telephoned so that they can decide how to proceed depending on the severity of the injury.

In the event of a serious accident, the child's parents will be informed immediately, and arrangements will be made to meet them at the casualty department of the hospital should this be necessary.

For children who require prescription medication, this will be carried along with parental permission and instructions for administration.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessments are undertaken for all aspects of Woodland Adventures, including for the journey, site and experiences. These are available to view on request.

Policy and procedures for use of tools, ropes and water activities will be followed at all times by staff. Copies of these are available to view on request.

Accident and Incident Reporting

All accidents, near-misses and dangerous occurrences will be recorded and reported in line with Glenwood Family Centre and East Renfrewshire Council policy. They will be reviewed by facilitating staff and managers and the appropriate action taken.

Cancellation due to Severe Weather

Prior to all Woodland Adventures, current weather conditions and weather forecast will be assessed. Consideration will be given to high winds, risk of lightning and extreme temperatures when making a judgement as to appropriate action. Weather conditions will continue to be monitored throughout the session.

In the event that weather conditions are considered too treacherous for the health and safety of children and staff, then the session will be cancelled and participants informed at the earliest opportunity.

Food Hygiene

Any food and drinks will be carried to the site in a sealed food container. Water and hand wipes will be available and staff will ensure children clean their hands before eating.

Toilet Procedures

All children will be encouraged to use the toilet prior to Woodland Adventures.

Should a child require the toilet during the session, best practice will be followed:

- A secluded area designated for this purpose
- Provision of toilet paper and hand sanitiser
- Removal of waste from site and appropriate disposal

Should any child be uncomfortable with this, then arrangements will be made for them to return to the centre.



Policies & Procedures

Safeguarding Children

Child safety is the responsibility of all staff in Glenwood Family Centre and should any concerns arise during Woodland Adventures, then the centre's Child Protection Procedure would be followed.

The Child Protection Coordinator for Glenwood Family Centre is the Head Teacher, Lorraine Brown.

Lost or Missing Child Procedure

Precautions are followed to reduce the possibility of this occurring.

- High adult to child ratio
- Numbers are checked before setting out
- Regular head counts are taken during the session by a designated adult
- The speed of walking will be that of the slowest participant, with the group staying together
- Children instructed to stay within agreed boundaries

In the unlikely event of a child going missing, the group will be gathered together with a staff member whilst other adults search the area. If after 5 minutes the child is still missing, the nursery will be informed and then the police.

Behaviour and Anti-bullying Policy

Glenwood Family Centre is committed to working in partnership with parents to promote positive behaviour among all children. This extends to Woodland Adventures. Everyone is encouraged to show respect for each other and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Praise is used to reinforce and promote positive behaviour.

East Renfrewshire Council is committed to the Scottish Government's vision of anti-bullying.

Policies are available to view on request.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Woodland Adventures will follow East Renfrewshire Council's policy and guidelines on confidentiality. Any information is protected by the Data Protection Act 1984 and may only be disclosed in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations. For further information please contact the centre.

Equal Opportunities

Woodland Adventures will adhere to East Renfrewshire Council's Equal Opportunity Statement.

