



# Walmsley's Woodland Handbook



# **Contents**

1. Walmsley's Woodland Sessions
2. Description of our Site
3. Aims
4. Travel Arrangements
5. Roles and Responsibilities of Adults
6. Safety
7. Rules
8. Clothing
9. A Typical Visit to the Woodland

## **1. Walmsley's Woodland Sessions**

Walmsley's Woodland sessions are an inspirational process that offers children regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning in a woodland environment.

Through a series of visits to woodland areas over an extended period of time, children are encouraged to be independent and, by working on small achievable tasks in a stimulating environment, are able to build self-esteem and develop social and behaviour management skills.

Walmsley's Woodland sessions are run by class teachers with the support of members of staff. All volunteers are DBS checked.

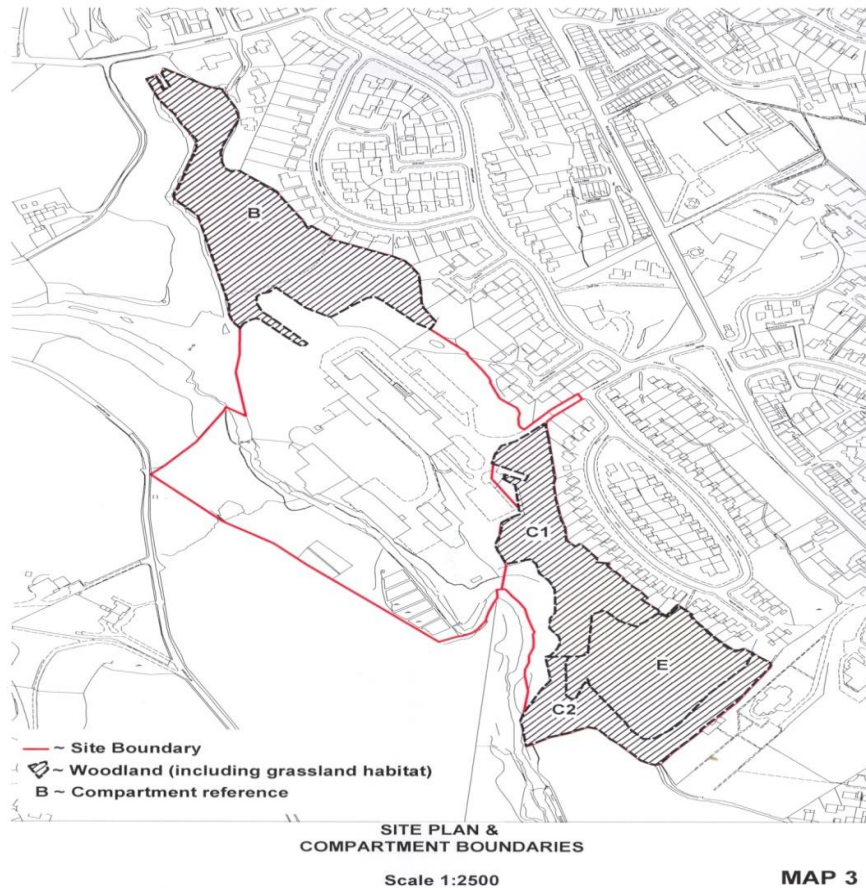
## **2. Description of our Site**

Our woodland site is to be found behind Christ Church Walmsley, adjacent to the school. The woodland was owned by Charles Topham and Sons Limited, who were responsible for developing the Deakins Mill buildings. The owner kindly gave us permission to use the woodland.

The woodland is part of 7.07 hectares of semi-natural broadleaved woodland which surrounds the recently developed Deakins Mill, a cotton mill which was built in the early 1800s. The woodland is found alongside a stream – Eagley Brook. As there are steep sides down to the brook, we do not currently visit there. The Walmsley children use the woodland to the south of Deakins. This consists of wooded areas, the dominant species of trees being beech and sycamore, with some birch, oak, ash, elder and hawthorn. Most of the woodland is included in the Longworth Clough Grade A Site of Biological Importance and the area is also subject to a Tree Preservation Order. The area has a wide variety of plants and fungi, as well as being home to a wide variety of creatures large and small.



## Map of Deakins Woodland



### **3. Aims of Walmsley's Woodland Sessions**

The sessions are about children exploring and experiencing the Natural World through practical involvement over an extended period of time. The varied natural resources of the woodland and the children's own interest combine to stimulate imaginative, creative and investigative activity. Fun and success mean that self-esteem is raised which impacts on children's lifelong learning and attitudes towards themselves, others and the world around them.

#### Aims of Sessions and Activities

- To familiarise children with the woodland area
- To explore and discover natural objects
- To learn Woodland Rules and keep to boundaries
- To observe children in order to learn about their individual needs and interests
- To develop good self-esteem through small achievable steps
- To provide a real context for language development

- To provide children with opportunities to take risks, solve problems, employ thinking skills and work collaboratively
- To complement learning in the classroom
- To foster love, understanding and respect for the Natural World

#### **4. Travel Arrangements**

As the woodland is just behind Christ Church, the children get to the site on foot. Children leave the classroom on foot and are responsible for guiding the trolley containing the equipment for the visit. An adult leads the children through the staff car park, along the school drive and onto the church drive. The path behind church is then taken to the entrance to the woodland, which is to be found at the top right of the churchyard. An adult remains at the back of the group at all times.

#### **5. Roles and Responsibilities of Adults**

- All adults supervising children in the Woodland will be DBS checked
- The minimum adult: We have 2 adults with up to 20 children
- Children who have a Statement of Special Educational Needs, which includes a requirement for a Special Needs Assistant, must have the individual adult support for their visit, in addition to the adult: pupil ratios already indicated
- The Woodland leaders and all other school staff will have an up to date Paediatric First Aid certificate
- The Woodland Leaders are responsible overall for the group at all times. In delegating supervisory roles to other adults in the group the group leader will;
  - allocate supervisory responsibility to each adult for a certain area or for named pupils if appropriate
  - ensure that each adult knows which pupils or area they are responsible for
  - ensure that all adults and pupils are aware of the expected standards of behavior

The Woodland Leader will:

- Have a reasonable prior knowledge of the pupils including any special educational needs, medical needs or disabilities
- Do the necessary Risk Assessments and keep these up to date
- Carry a list/register of all group members
- Carry medical forms/ medical equipment for all adults and pupils
- Carry emergency procedures form

- Regularly check that all of the group members are present
- Check the weather forecast for the day of the visit and make appropriate decisions about clothing and activities
- Have a clear plan of the activities to be undertaken and their objectives
- Have means to contact school if help is needed
- Continually monitor the appropriateness of the activities, behavior of pupils, and physical and mental condition of the group and the suitability of the prevailing weather conditions
- Reassess supervisory roles if one adult needs to give prolonged attention to one group member
- Be competent to exercise appropriate control of the group and to ensure that all group members abide by the agreed standards of behavior
- Clearly understand emergency procedures and be able to carry them out

Each Pupil should:

- Have been given clear, understandable and appropriate instructions
- Alert an adult if someone is missing or in difficulties
- Have a meeting place to return to and an instruction to call for an adult if separated
- Understand and accept the expected standards of behavior

## 6. **Safety**

### First Aid

The Woodland Leader will:

- Ensure that all medical equipment/medical forms for pupils are put into the Safety bag
- Ensure that all permissions have been given by Parents before taking children on a visit
- Check that contents of Safety bag are complete and up to date
- In summer ensure that the group has appropriate protection from sun, insect bites and dehydration, as well as appropriate clothing
- In winter, ensure that adults and pupils have appropriate clothing to ensure that they are warm
- Ensure that conditions of the woodland are suitable for a visit on every occasion. Ensure that signs are put out warning dog-walkers that the children are in the woods

## 7. Rules

- Stay in sight of the adults at all times
- Do not damage any living things or natural objects
- Do not touch/eat berries, plants, fungi
- Do not pick up sharp objects or litter, tell the adults if you see anything like this
- If a loose dog comes near, stand still and quiet
- Test branches for weight bearing/ mud & water for depth with a stick before exploring/playing
- Look after each other

## 8. Clothing

The Woodland Leader will ensure that all adults and children wear appropriate clothing for the visit. School will provide waterproof coats and trousers, parents will be asked to provide;

### Spring and Summer

- Old long lightweight pants
- Suitable T-shirt
- Wellies
- Spare socks
- Sun hat

### Autumn and Winter

- Old long warm pants – tracksuit bottoms (NOT jeans)
- T-shirt – long sleeved preferable
- Warm jumper or fleece to fit under waterproof.
- NAMED hats/gloves as appropriate – these will get muddy
- Wellies
- Spare socks (children wear two pairs in very cold weather)

## **9. A Typical Visit to the Woodland**

### Infant Children

The children are put into groups of up to 20 children. Each group is supervised by a teacher and a member of staff. The groups visit the woods on a set day per week on a rota throughout the year. The visits go ahead in all weathers apart from very strong winds, when dangers from falling branches and loose debris may be an issue. If the church drive is very icy we may cancel.

The children have a trolley to carry everything they need for a visit. This may include the signs to warn dog walkers of our presence in the woods, plant and animal spotter guides, a rucksack containing a healthy snack and a drink of warm cordial in autumn and winter, cold in summer. We may also take equipment for den making, small world play, magnifying glasses, spoons and bowls for digging and potion making, trowels, paper and drawing materials, etc. In the summer term, we may either build a small fire for cooking, or use a disposable barbeque. Any activities with fire are well supervised and the children are trained to be safe around a fire.

On arrival in the woods we usually go to one of our two 'base camp' areas. This is where we have provided log seating in a circle where we sit and go through the woodland rules and chat about what we are going to do.

We may then go for a walk to a different area of the woods, or do an activity that has been planned by the Woodland Leader. We may create some woodland art, build a home for a small toy or use the magnifying glasses to look closely at mini-beasts.

We then gather again at base camp to reflect on what we have done, as well as have a drink. There is always time for free play. Play and child-initiated activity form the main part of the sessions. Adults may plan a certain activity, to teach a new skill or to inspire imagination and creativity, but it is often the children who then take it in the direction they are interested in. The adults are there to support the children in whatever way they need.

At the end of the session, we check that we have left the woodland as we would wish to find it. We go back to school tired but happy, looking forward to what we might see on our next visit.