



# GARGUNNOCK PLAYGROUP Woodland Play Sessions



## Our aims are to:

- Promote and nurture learning and development through play in a challenging, spacious and creative environment
- Recognise all children and adults as individuals with rights of their own and support their individual capacity and potential for learning and development
- Encourage children to express themselves as individuals and as members of a group within a supportive environment
- Offer children a broad and balanced range of activities from which to choose.
- Develop capacity for staff, parents and children to work as a team and provide a closeness and freedom with nature, deepening the exploration and connection with self and the environment
- Foster adult understanding of the rationale for and benefits of outdoor learning
- Cultivate positive relationships within the immediate and larger community
- Promote health and wellbeing through physical and emotional resilience, healthy eating and healthy minds

## Contact Us:

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Playgroup Phone : 07564 755919 (only available during playgroup sessions)

## Woodland Play Sessions at Gargunnock Playgroup!

### Commencing October 2016

We are excited to announce that our new Woodland Play Sessions will start at 09:15 on October 3rd 2016. One week (Monday and Thursday sessions) per month (on the first full week of each month) we will re-locate our playgroup to a wonderful woodland area in the estate of Gargunnock House.

### What are Woodland Play Sessions?

Woodland Play Sessions (WooPS) are based on the Forest Kindergarten (FK) model. Also called "nature kindergartens" FKs have been established in Scandinavia for over 25 years. Forestry Commission Scotland having been developing their FK Projects over the past 2 years, connecting young children from early years establishments within Central Scotland, with their natural heritage.

FK Projects are unique as they offer young children regular opportunities to learn through play within their local woodland and/or natural setting. Play is child led, child centred and enhanced by the freedom to explore using their multiple senses. These opportunities have a high ratio of adults to children, clear curriculum links and take place in almost all weathers, all year round.

### Why do we need Woodland Play Sessions?

Children learn through play, they learn by experimenting and trying things out. In our busy modern day and technological age however children often lead adult-like and highly-scheduled lives with limited opportunity to choose their own place and time to play. Play opportunities are frequently adult led and directed in play areas designed by adults where children are kept safe and protected from danger. Children's play however should provide an ability to experience the world as a place of mystery, risk and adventure where they can experiment, negotiate and experience new things. Our Woodland Play Sessions aim to provide our children with an environment that they can shape and develop and which will offer them opportunities to explore, create and imagine their own games and activities, supported, but not directed, by motivated and enthusiastic adults.

## Benefits

FK experiences cater to all children's learning styles and ages/stages of development, providing your child with a stimulating environment to thrive and learn through real life context. They are beneficial to young children's holistic development, health and well being. They encourage self-esteem, confidence and perseverance and promote Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Effective Contributors and Responsible Citizens.

Young children need to take risks to learn about and understand their own capabilities. Some activities and sessions, such as den building, toasting marshmallows over an open fire, tree climbing and using tools safely allow them to take risks within a safe and supportive environment and learn persistent and vital life skills

**There is no such thing as bad weather only the wrong clothes!**



During our Woodland Play Sessions your child will be outside in almost all weather so it is extremely important that you ensure your child is suitably dressed for the weather and our ever-changing seasons. If your child is warm and less exposed to the effects of the weather she or he will be more able to learn and play freely without restrictions. Appropriate clothing consequently is essential and we recommend you provide a few changes. Please send a spare plastic bag for us to put wet clothing in. The following are some of our suggestions :

### Cold/Wet Weather

- Waterproof bag or rucksack which your child can carry
- Warm base layer – long johns or tights, long sleeve top and thermal socks.
- 1 or 2 warm fleece/wool long sleeve tops depending on temperature.
- Cosy trousers i.e tracksuit pants, fleece leggings (NOT jeans).
- Two pairs of gloves or mitts (one waterproof).

- Warm hat and scarf
- Wellies (with extra socks) or waterproof walking boots.

### Warmer weather

- Long trousers (these help prevent scratches and stings)
- Short sleeve top.
- Jumper
- Waterproof trousers and jacket (elasticated waterproof trousers, or dungarees are a great way to keep children warmer. These can be tricky to fasten, but children soon become quite proficient and this is great for their fine motor skills! It is important that even in dry weather your child still has their waterproofs as this enables them to play in puddles, mud and sit on damp ground etc. They also protect from scratches and prickles!

If you feel your child needs sunscreen or insect repellent please apply at home.

### Drop off and Pick up.

Our Woodland Play Sessions start at 09:15 to allow parents and carers time to drop off at school and make their way to Gargunock Estate. Please drop off and collect children at The Lodge Car Park (see map at end). Please try to arrive promptly so as not extend our time in the car park. If you arrive late and we have already left then please walk your child along to the site yourself. Our usual practice of requesting that parents inform us of absences is even more important for Woodland Play Sessions. Please text or phone (07564 755919) to let us know.

### Our site

Our site is a short walk from the car park on the estate road. Our journey to and from the site will form an important part of our session allowing us to experience and share even more of the environment around us.

Our base is a specified area in the woodland with which children will quickly become familiar and confident. We aim to have clear boundary lines and we work with children to establish setting rules. There will be a toilet tent offering shelter and privacy and hand washing facilities will be available.

During our initial sessions we aim to identify and build on children's interests and from these

develop a supply of resources which will support and extend experiences.

A map of the site can be found at the end of this leaflet. We strongly advise that parents take time, and perhaps a walk around the estate, to ensure they are familiar with where places are. Then, for any reason, should we need to change a drop off or pick up point and, say, ask you to pick up at The Stables you will know where we are.

## Waste disposal

All waste is removed from site at the end of each session. We aim to promote reduce, reuse and recycle during our WooPS sessions and will separate waste and recycle or compost as much as we possibly can. We aim only to use environmentally friendly products to support hygiene.



## The Adult Role

Children need all of the adults around them to understand why outdoor play provision is essential for them, and adults who are committed and able to make its potential available to them.

Our staff actively value and enjoy the outdoors themselves, see the potential and consequences it has for young children's well-being and development, and want to be outside with them. We recognise that our attitude, understanding, commitment and positive thinking are important, as well as the skills to make the best use of what the outdoors has to offer and to effectively support child-led learning. We aim to transmit our enthusiasm and passion for outdoor learning to parents and the wider community so that children are better supported and encouraged by adults in their outdoor experiences.

We will always require a duty parent to stay with us for WooPS sessions and we hope this

will be a positive experience for you. Please come ready and prepared to join in and have fun with us.

We also would encourage you to support and extend your child's learning by going out for walks to our WooPS site and encouraging them to talk about what they see, have been doing an learning. This gives your child the opportunity to share their newfound knowledge and skills with you.

## Safety.

Young children need to feel secure, nurtured and valued outdoors. This includes clear behavioural boundaries (using rules to enable freedom), nurturing places and times outside and respect for how individual children prefer to play and learn.



We will be working very closely with the children to familiarise them with our new setting. This will involve identifying boundaries and making sure they are aware of where and where they are not allowed to go.

Our service operates with the belief that we provide safety for the children that balances the benefit of risk taking. We aim to ensure that children are protected from hazards yet provide an enabling and supporting learning environment which allows discovery and challenge. We also take seriously our duty of care to ensure staff safety.

WooPS aim to offer a risky play environment however we will never intend to expose children to danger, we wish them to be able to identify and manage their own risk and consequently develop confidence and resilience.

Our current first aid procedures encompass WooPS. Our Parent Handbook details emergency procedures in the unlikely event these are necessary.

We require additional permissions and health information forms to be completed to enable children to join in our Woodland Play Sessions - this can be found at the end of this leaflet.

## Activities

Initially we aim to be identifying children's interests and to build on them. We aim to

provide some equipment such as ropes and tarpaulins so encourage activities such as den building. Many children will not have experienced having lengthy times where they are not provided with set activities, games or toys and it is anticipated that some children might initially find WooPS boring. Staff will aim to encourage children to develop imagination and confidence to try out and explore things they might not otherwise do.

## Photographs



Photographs of the children's activities will be taken to record our WooPS journey and some may be used to publicise our activities. If you have any objections to this, please speak to a Playleader or Committee Member.

## Snack

Snack is always an important part of our playgroup sessions and the picnic aspect of our woodland play sessions will likely increase this. Facilities in the woods however are limited so we suggest that snack consists of food which is easy to eat and needs little preparation. Snack does not need to be substantial - we suggest that a plain biscuit such as Rich Tea or oatcake along with a drink of milk (we will supply water) will suffice. Parents are welcome to bring in fruit, veg or cheese but please don't make things too difficult for yourselves. In colder weather staff may bring hot chocolate in flasks or heat up our own over a fire.



## Useful Links and Information

[Owl Scotland - increasing opportunities for learning outdoors](#)

[Play Scotland : Delivering Children and Young People's Right to Play in Scotland](#)  
[Play Strategy For Scotland: Our Vision](#)



## Suppliers

Lidl's regularly have offers on children's waterproofs - we have found them to be good quality and reasonably priced.

[www.raindrops.co.uk](http://www.raindrops.co.uk)

[www.rukka.com](http://www.rukka.com)

[www.polarnopyret.co.uk](http://www.polarnopyret.co.uk)

<http://www.raindrops.co.uk>

<http://www.muddyfaces.co.uk>

<http://www.togz.co.uk>

we appreciate that some of these are expensive - remember they are for playing in!

[www.warmwellies.co.uk](http://www.warmwellies.co.uk)

Decathlon – stocks a large range of children's outdoors and waterproof gear.

## Registration

We require an additional permission and health information form to be completed before a child can attend our Woodland Play Sessions. There are 2 copies at the end of this form, one for your records. Please complete and return before (or on) the first sessions.

## Questions you might have

All participants will receive an e-copy of our handbook and this is also available on our website. It contains many more details about our sessions. If you have any questions however, then please feel free to approach staff or a committee member.

## Our Site



We are passionate about the benefits of outdoor play at Gargunnock Playgroup. Here are some of the reasons why.

1. Outdoor play is less adult prescribed allowing children to make decisions about where to play and who to play with.
2. Bacteria, viruses and other yucky stuff in the soil and mud helps develop our immune systems and can help combat asthma and allergies. Research shows that children who are active are more like to remain active in later life reducing future risks of cancer, diabetes and obesity.
3. The indoor environment is fairly stable whereas the outdoor world changes minute by minute, this encourages interest and stimulates curiosity and imagination.
4. Children learn about the world around them through direct experiences, they learn names for trees, flowers, animals and insects. They appreciate seasonality and weather patterns and increase their environmental awareness
5. Running around, exploring, climbing, playing with sticks and stones strengthens muscles and bones and increases stamina and dexterity.
6. Uneven or unstable surfaces such as rocks, trees, sand and mud develop balance, agility and dexterity
7. Regular access to outdoor play improves concentration, attention span and memory
8. Most of our vitamin D comes from sunlight, vitamin D is essential for strong bones
9. The outdoor environment provides challenge and excitement and encourages children to explore their own limitations and stretch their abilities. It promotes resilience, persistence and confidence.
10. Sunshine and natural light lower the chance of short sightedness and improves distance vision.
11. Access to outdoor areas relieves stress and promotes a sense of wellbeing.
12. Active physical play in the outdoors burns energy. It reduces anxiety and stress and aids restful sleep.

## Pro forma consent (Parent Copy)

I agree to ..... (insert child's name) participating in Gargunnock Playgroups Woodland Play Sessions and give my permission for:

- The audio recording of conversation
- The use of photographs and videos in publicly-available reports and news articles for promotional and educational purposes
- The use of written research data for reports, presentations and publications.

In addition I confirm that

- I have completed a Playgroup enrolment form
- I have completed a Woodland Play Session health and safety questionnaire which provides staff with relevant information regarding my child's care
- I have provided staff with contact information for use in an emergency
- I confirm that I have read a copy of the Woodland Play Sessions Handbook of Policies and Procedures and agree to abide by the policies and procedures it contains.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to child \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Telephone Contact Number \*\* \_\_\_\_\_

Email Contact \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to: Jane Bain, Senior Playleader, Gargunnock Playgroup, 8 Millbrae, Gargunnock, FK8 3BB or to a playgroup committee member.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*\*This is the number we will use to contact you in the event of cancellation. In an emergency we will use the contact information detailed on your enrolment form.

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## Woodland Play Session health and safety questionnaire

Child's Name

Date of Birth

To help us plan our woodland sessions and first aid provision please answer the following questions:

Is there any activity/task that your child may find difficult for health or mobility reasons?

Is your child taking any medication that a first aider or doctor would need to be aware of?

Is there any information that we may need to ensure your child's safety and well-being (e.g. fear of dogs)?