

Outdoor Studios

Visiting Groups' Information

King's Wood is 1,500 acres of managed woodland and is a dynamic environment that changes with the seasons. As such, there are conditions that make it very different from the school environment and your group should be aware of this. Before every group starts into the forest they will have a talk about Health and Safety to make sure that they are aware of any risks, but if you could pass the following information on to them, we can make sure that they have a comfortable and safe visit.

The Outdoor Studios artist and visiting staff will be given a safety tag and whistle to wear. There are emergency numbers on the tag. If the whistle is blown everybody stops.

Weather:

Your group should be aware that apart from the natural cover provided by the trees within the wood, there is no other cover. You should bring waterproof clothing, even in summer. Please also ensure that you bring warm clothing, with several layers being better than one. Adult groups may want to bring hot drinks in flasks if the weather is likely to turn very cold.

Shoes:

Apart from a few all weather paths, most of the pathways in the forest are dirt tracks: dusty in the summer, muddy in the wet. There are also trip hazards due to uneven ground and loose chalk and flint pieces. Please tell your students to wear sensible, waterproof shoes – no new trainers or high heels! As a rule of thumb, expect to get muddy and dress accordingly.

Accessibilty:

The forest paths are uneven and some are on steep inclines. There is no public vehicular access to the forest and any special access requiring vehicles is strictly by arrangement with Outdoor Studios, who, in turn, request permission from the Forestry Commission on an individual basis. If your group does have accessibility issues please contact us and we will work with you to plan your visit.

Snakes:

Apart from many other animals within the woods, King's Wood is home to two species of snakes: grass snakes and adders. Students should be told not to touch snakes should they see them; Outdoor Studios will have a first aid pack and anti-venom is kept at the local hospital A&E department.

Ticks:

Ticks have serious consequences if not treated properly. The links below explain the (rare) dangers of Lyme disease. The instance of Lyme disease is very low in Kent, but it does exist nonetheless. These precautions will help your group to avoid being bitten when in woodland or heath areas:

- +Wear long sleeve shirt
- +Tuck trousers into socks
- +Use insect repellent
- +Check yourself and any children and/or pets for ticks

Fungi:

Especially in the autumn, King's Wood is full of amazing and potentially dangerous fungi. As toxins can be ingested through the skin, students should be told not to touch any fungi that they might see; identification is difficult even for experts and consequences can range from a nasty bout of vomiting and nausea to hospitalisation.

Bracken:

Pupils should be briefed not to pick bracken with their bare hands. The stems can give a deep and serious cut, like a bad paper cut. Bracken should be cut with secateurs only.

Trees:

Groups should be encouraged not to climb trees or potentially unstable piles of wood.

Smoking:

There is strictly NO SMOKING in the forest. This is a fire hazard and is very serious.

Facilities:

Please make sure that your students know that there are no toilet facilities or drinking water within the woods. As there are no bins, any rubbish should be taken home and not left within the forest. As there are no shops, a packed lunch and plenty of fluids are essential. If you book a full day visit with us including walk and artist workshop we will erect a camping style compost toilet in our outdoor studio area.

Tools:

During the workshops pupils may use tools to cut and prepare branches and foliage in order to create 2D or 3D art works. These are:

Loppers – used to cut branches up to a maximum up to approx 10cm in diameter.

Saws - to cut branches larger than 10cm in diameter.

Secateurs – for cutting small twigs and bracken

Safety catches on tools MUST be ON whenever a tool is not in use.

Other equipment which may be used:

Scissors, string, ink made from natural materials, chalk found in the forest, charcoal, chestnut paper or recycled paper. From time to time artists may bring in other materials.

Please note we provide gardening type gloves for pupils to wear while using tools.

Although Outdoor Studios artists will introduce demonstrate the safe and sensible use of any tools prior to the workshop, the safety of the pupils while using tools is the responsibility of the accompanying staff and not the artist. If you have any issues or questions around the use of tools please speak to our education staff before your visit.

You may need to include the above information about tool use by your pupils on your school's risk assessment.

Child protection:

All Outdoor Studios artists are DRB checked to ensure the highest level of child protection; however, be aware that the woods are open to members of the public and so students should not be allowed to wander unaccompanied. Outdoor Studios are there to facilitate your visit and provide stimulating and creative workshops but student supervision and safety must be the responsibility of school staff at all times.

Forest Operations:

King's Wood is a working environment, actively managed by the Forestry Commission; we coordinate our activities closely and work in designated areas of the forest but students should still be aware of car access roads and the possibility of encountering foresters with machinery.

The forest is a wonderful environment; full of opportunities to create and learn; please help us to keep your students safe and happy by passing on these suggestions to them. We look forward to seeing you in the forest!

FIRE

- In the event of forest fire, Outdoor Studios will commence group evacuation procedure, dialling 999. The map ref is on the emergency tag and location is King's Wood
- The most dangerous areas of the forest are indicated on the FC map with the fir/pine tree symbols. Pine and fir are the most flammable areas of the forest. All freelancers should familiarise themselves with the map
- Outdoor Studios will assess the wind direction and lead the group to the closest main forest track AWAY from the fire and if possible upwind from the smell of the fire i.e. not in the direction the wind is blowing bringing fire with it. Where it is not safe to move in the opposite direction, the group should be taken to the edge of the forest and out into the fields or onto a large forest track whichever is closer
- Outdoor Studios will alert the FC (numbers are on the emergency tag) and inform both of the group's location and where they are moving to