



SUNTRAP SQUIRRELS



General Information and FAQ

What's it all about?

Suntrap Squirrels is an outdoor pre-school club, based on the highly successful Forest School model. Join your child as they explore the forest, learn about themselves and make friends. Each month has a main theme, designed to progressively build important life skills. There is also free play time, where the woodland setting and supplied resources, act as the stimulation for children's creativity. As children return to the same area of woodland, they begin to feel it is their own special place and grow in confidence to explore the outdoors.

When and where is it?

Sessions will run on the third Monday of each month, from 10:00am-12:30pm. Meet the group at Suntrap Centre, IG10 4AJ (free parking available), then go into Epping Forest for your mini adventure.

What will my child gain?

Many studies have shown the enormous benefits of this type of learning, in natural settings. The compound experiences can have a profound effect on children; with adults remarking how their personalities and abilities have flourished. Otherwise restless children are soothed by the natural environment; while those disengaged, are inspired by its endless possibilities. Through Suntrap Squirrels, your child can develop:

- Teamwork and communication skills
- Confidence and independence
- Resilience and motivation
- Physical strength and skills
- Problem-solving abilities
- Self-care and risk management
- Respect for others and the environment
- Enjoyment and value of the natural world

With such comprehensive benefits, it's no wonder such sessions are so popular!

What will I get from it?

As you share these experiences with your child, you can strengthen your special relationship and perhaps see them in a new light. Experienced Suntrap tutors will give you inspiration for other activities and ways of helping your child learn through play. You will have the opportunity to develop your confidence in using the forest as a free family space and somewhere you can recharge your own batteries. Adults usually say they have had as much fun as their children and what better excuse?!

Is it safe?

All activities are specifically designed for ages 2-5 and fully risk assessed. Adjustments can be made for individuals with additional needs to enable their participation wherever possible. Clear safety procedures will be in place and children are supported to assess situations for themselves, so they learn how to keep safe in future.

What about my younger children?

Suntrap Squirrels is aimed at ages 2-5 but younger siblings are welcome, free of charge. Please note, however, that the terrain is not buggy suitable, so baby carriers are far more preferable. There are baby changing facilities at Suntrap Centre but obviously, not in the Forest itself.

What should we wear?

We will be out in almost all weathers and are very hands-on, so we advise layers of clothing that you don't mind getting dirty. That way, you can join in to the full while remaining comfortable. Sturdy footwear (trainers, walking boots or wellies) is required. Much of the year, the ground is quite muddy so footwear will need to be waterproof. We have plenty of wellies that you can borrow at no charge (children's size 8 up to adult size 12).

What should I bring?

We provide all resources for the activities so you only need to bring what you would usually take on a walk with your children. We may stop for a snack during the session and like to model healthy eating. Please bring a suitable snack and drink, if desired.

Where can I eat?

You are welcome to bring a packed lunch to eat in Suntrap grounds after the session. We have plenty of picnic tables, an outdoor shelter and you may be able to use a classroom, if one is available. There are also several local eateries within a few miles.