

# Forest School

The Forest School Association states that, “Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process, that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting”.

## Forest School Curriculum Intent

It is our intention that every pupil develops a real passion for the great outdoors and celebrates, respects and cares for their local, natural environments. The ethos of Forest School is based on a respect for children and their capacity to initiate, investigate and maintain curiosity in the world around them. It believes in a child's right to play, their right to access the outdoors and their right to experience measured risk in the natural world. In this way, our pupils will develop their emotional intelligence through social interaction and building a resilience to enable creative engagement with their peers.

We endeavour to provide Forest School learning experiences that develop:

- enjoyment of the great outdoors and the physical challenges that this can bring.
- both fine and gross motor skills.
- personal and social skills by creating team-working opportunities to complete challenges.
- specific Forest School skills, for example knot tying, fire lighting, whittling etc.
- a knowledge of the common plants, trees, and wildlife within our local area (Flora and Fauna).
- an awareness of the seasonal change and how this impacts the natural environment.
- problem solving skills where resilience is required to see through practical tasks, for example den building.

# Implementation

Our Forest School teacher develops independence through pupil-led exploration and discovery within our local area at Scadbury Woods. Here, meaningful experiences are nurtured for positive lifelong impacts, through creating pupil inspired experiences based on exploration and discovery. Forest School plays a key role in our pupils Wellbeing and provides opportunities to develop social, emotional, and physical needs as well as confidence and self-esteem through pupil inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting.

Every forest school session is carefully planned to ensure that just the right amount of support is in place so that every pupil, regardless of need, can access the activities while still experiencing appropriate challenge. At the end of every forest school session there is a time for reflection, here pupils will discuss their learning and their experiences; this provides a key opportunity for the Forest School teacher to ensure that areas of interest and curiosity are an active part the following session – valuing pupil voice. Our Forest School sessions are engaging and exciting and are often the part of the week that our pupils look forward to the most.

Some examples of the activities that take place at Forest School include:

- shelter building
- wildlife study (creating bug hotels/huts, woodland management)
- physical activities such as team games, tree climbing
- tool use
- rope and string work
- fire building, cooking food, using the Kelly Kettle
- art activities
- story time

Every class throughout the school takes part in a Forest School session every week. This provides our pupils with the opportunities they need to become comfortable and familiar with nature and the great outdoors. We provide waterproofs and wellies so that our pupils can focus on exploring and not worry about getting wet or muddy! Every element of the environment, the tools used, and the activities planned are all risk assessed to ensure the pupils can engage safely with ‘measured risk’.

The six core principles of Forest School as set out by the Forest School Association are:

1. Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
4. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
5. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
6. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

These core principles influence how the sessions are developed and the opportunities presented to pupils.

## Impact

Forest school supports our pupils in understanding how important they are and what a significant impact they can have on their local environment. Pupils learn that they as individuals can have an influence on the world today, for example, through recycling, protecting trees and respecting the natural environments. Pupils are also more aware of the responsibility of their generation on impacting the future health of the environment and climate.

The sensory experiences provided by Forest School help to prompt language development. Observations of our pupils at forest school identify improving communication skills and how these opportunities for pupil led conversation, discussion and exploration can have a positive effect on self-esteem; this is a crucial part of development. Taking pupils outside of the classroom allows them to identify other strengths they may have, this is particularly beneficial to our pupils who have struggled in their previous settings.

Pupils will have the opportunities to build on previous learning and develop new skills. We measure the impact of our Forest School curriculum through observation, taking photos and videos and making

assessment in sessions where pupils develop and refine key skills, for example, fire lighting. Pupils social and emotional development is tracked using our SEMH tracker, however, Forest School only plays a part here as Wellbeing is a holistic approach across the school and though our daily curriculum and interactions with all pupils as a priority. Progress is also captured through pupil voice as we reflect on learning at the end of every Forest School session and give each other feedback too; this information is invaluable to measuring progress in skills, and knowledge and understanding as well as informing planning.

Pupils consolidate their learning in other areas of the curriculum, particularly with science. Pupils are keen and feel safe to discuss their class learning when triggered by an observation at Forest School, for example, discussing the water cycle, the impact that high winds have on trees, how the seasons impact the way shadows fall at different times of the day as the days get shorter and longer. Pupils have discussed issues around climate change and global warming as well as naming different parts of plants and understanding how the seasons impact the way plants look and behave, pupils explore food chains and how this links with the natural environments they are exploring.

Pupils develop in their confidence and resilience because of the independence, time and space given to them in their learning. Pupils also develop their own ability to measure risk which is an invaluable lifelong skill as they will be able to make safer choices for themselves.

## Further information on Forest School for parents and carers

Further information about Forest School and its origins can be accessed [here](#).

A short clip explaining [‘What is Forest School?’](#)

Information about the grounds we use can be accessed [here](#).

Our parent/carers and pupil friendly Forest School handbook can be found **here**.