Why Forest School?

What is Forest School?

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

Quality Forest School is delivered based on the six key principles that shape and govern the Forest School ethos.

Forest School principles

1. **The Long-Term Principle -** Forest School is a long-term process of frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.
2. **The Nature Principle -** Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. **The Risk Principle** - Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
4. **The Holistic Learning Principle** - Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
5. **The Leadership Principle -** Forest School is run by qualified Practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional Practice.
6. **The Community Principle -** Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

(Extracted from Full principles and criteria for good practice | Forest School Association)

Why Forest School?

What is a Holistic Approach in Forest School?

Children having the space and freedom to be themselves and being in charge of their own learning. Having fun, taking risks, solving problems, learning new skills and achieving their own goals. Forest School is child led, they are in charge and sessions are planned and developed around their interests, abilities, and choices.

Who delivers Forest School and what are their qualifications?

Mrs Wilkes is our current Level 3 Forest School Leader. She is currently running our Forest School sessions at our Forest School site. Mrs Blackborn is our Level 2 Forest School Assistant.

Mrs Wilkes qualifications –
- BA (Hons) Product Design (Including 4 years workshop skills).
- Level 2 Award in Forest School Programme Support.
- Level 3 Certificate for Forest School Leaders.
- Outdoor First Aid Training.
- Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene.

Mrs Blackbourns qualifications -
- Level 2 Award in Forest School Programme Support.
- Outdoor First Aid Training.
- Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene.

Who can you contact if you have any questions or concerns?

If you are worried about any of the activities we may be offering or have any questions about the sessions, activities, clothing needed, or your child being involved in sessions please do not hesitate to contact us through your school.

Risk assessments for the site, activities, areas, fauna and flora and equipment have been carried out. Safety talks are given at the beginning of each session to ensure the children's safety. There is tidy up time at the end of each session to ensure the site is kept in good condition, and creations are checked before leaving Forest school.

Why Forest School?

What will your children be doing in a Forest School session?

Our Forest School sites have been created in a fenced area off the playgrounds on the school sites. We are incredibly lucky to have these facilities.

During the sessions we will be exploring our natural environment, learning to care for the environment and providing a safe space for children to just be themselves. Together we will learn ways to keep ourselves safe outdoors, how we can look after our environment and any animals, bugs or insects that live in these areas. We will learn about Flora and Fauna (trees/plants and bugs/insects/wildlife). Why we need to protect them and care for them, how we can look after them and what the benefits of them in the environment are.

We are also going to find ways to have fun and be creative outdoors.
Our Forest Schools are a safe environment for children to be themselves, build new friendships, and let their creativity and confidence grow.

There are some rules we will all need to follow to keep everyone safe and protect our environment, we go through the rules at the beginning of each session. Unless the children do not understand them in which case, an appropriate number of staff will be there to keep them safe.

Forest school sessions will be once a week, and you will be told the day of your child's session. Different year groups will go up to Forest School each term.

We will be offering activities at each session, and these will often be repeated to enhance children's skills and resilience.

Some of the activities on offer will be;

- Bug hunting
- Den building
- Treehouse climbing
- Natural art and crafts
- Potion making
- Mud kitchen

Why Forest School?

Tools

In Forest School, sometimes, we learn to use tools safely to create items using natural resources.

These activities will be on a 1:1 basis with a Forest School Leader or Assistant.

We will be using tools such as:

- A bow saw.
- A folding saw.
- A knife.
- A brace drill.

Children will be trained how to use the following tools more independently and will be supervised on a 1:1 up to a 1:4 adult to child ratio with a member of staff –

- A peeler.
- A hammer and nails.

Children will wear safety gloves on their helper hand and be shown how to use these safely and will be under constant supervision in an area specifically for tool use away from as many distractions as possible.

Children have to be invited into the tool area to use the tools. Children are encouraged to walk around the tool area at all times, even when it is not in use.

The tools are kept in a locked toolbox when not in use.

Why Forest School?

Fire

Whilst at Forest School we will be learning how to stay safe around our fire pit and how to be safe in the fire circle area.

Some things we will use our fire pit for is, to keep warm, to cook food and make pencils. The sorts of food we cook on the fire are –

- Popcorn.
- S' mores.
- Toast.
- Melted chocolate with fruit.

We also use our Kelly Kettle to make hot chocolate.

We aim to cater for allergies and dietary requirements where possible.

The Fire pit will be always supervised whilst the fire is lit, and no children will be near the area with the fire on without an adult present.

When we are cooking it will be on a 1:1 to 1:4 basis depending on the activity, with the Forest School Leader. Children are not permitted in the inner fire circle where the fire pit is unless invited by the Forest School leader.

Children are encouraged to walk around the outer fire circle away from the inner fire circle at all times, even when it is not in use.

Why Forest School?

Skills learnt in Forest School

- **The importance of following safety rules and instructions** - The children will be able to recite the Forest School rules as they will know them so well.
- **The safe use of tools and equipment** - Peeling, hammering, drilling and sawing etc.
- **Fire safety, how to safely light a fire, how to behave safely around a fire and how to safely cook on a fire** – Striking, cooking s 'mores, toast, popcorn, hot chocolate etc..
- **Risk taking and being able to independently risk assess if an activity is safe to do** – For example climbing in the tree houses, playing on the tractors or den building.
- **Creative thinking** – Arts and crafts and the many things that have been created this year in Forest School.
- **Learning through play and imaginative play** – For example we have had gourmet mud dishes made in the mud kitchen, many amazing potions, tractor car washes, McDonalds drive throughs, a bowling alley and much more.
- **Independence of choosing the activities to do** – No two Forest School sessions are the same as we follow the children's interests.
- **Messy play** – It's ok to get your hands dirty – For example, the mud kitchen and potion making.
- **Fine motor skills** – Colouring, writing and drawing, for example on the chalk boards.
- **Gross motor skills** – Climbing in the tree houses, pedalling on the tractors or carrying objects whilst den building.
- **Communication** – Talking to each other or working as a team.

Why Forest School?

Why are these Forest School skills useful?

To improve children's:

- Emotional well-being.
- Self-esteem.
- Confidence.
- Resilience.
- Persistence when facing difficulty.
- Engagement in tasks.
- Teamwork and developing closer relationships.
- Courage.
- Curiosity.
- Playfulness.
- Self-control.
- Responsibility.
- Independence.
- Creativity.
- Appreciation, care and respect for the natural environment.

They can then take these skills learned and apply them to everyday life.

Why Forest School?

What is needed for Forest School?

Before a child can attend Forest School, a completed medical questionnaire or a forms document should be completed and returned to the school your child attends.

Clothing at Forest School

If possible, please can you make sure your children come to Forest School with appropriate clothing, thank you –

<u>Suggested clothing for staff and children (all weathers)</u>

Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless deemed unsafe by the Forest School Leader.

'There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing'

Suitable clothing is essential for all to be able to participate. In their kits children should have:

- Long sleeved T-shirt.
- Trousers, to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches.
- Waterproof over trousers and jacket.
- Long socks, wellies, warm boots or old trainers (in very hot dry weather).
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied.
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc. are required.
- Please bring clothes in a named bag which should be taken home each week to be washed.