

Forest School Curriculum Statement

*“The best classroom and the richest cupboard
are roofed only by the sky.”*

Margaret McMillan

Intent – What we are trying to achieve?

Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process that offers opportunities for holistic growth, social, emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual learning through regular experiences in the outdoors.

It is a program employed by our school to support our growth mindset approach, develop play, exploration and supported risk-taking in a safe, non-judgemental, nurturing environment.

Forest School encourages children to:

- Develop their practical, personal and social skills
- Improve their concentration skills
- Work through practical problems and challenges
- Make decisions and evaluate risk
- Reflect on their learning experiences
- Use tools to create and build
- Develop their: language and communication and fine/gross motor skills
- Work co-operatively with others, thereby enhancing teamwork and collaborative learning
- Respect, understand and develop curiosity for the natural world
- Experience achievement and success
- Develop confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experience in a natural setting; solving problems, building self-belief and promoting resilience.
- Express ideas and thoughts respectfully.
- Broaden emotional literacy.
- Value the importance of friendship.

We have designed and developed a forest school area on the school site to facilitate the implementation of a Forest School curriculum and have three fully qualified Forest School leads on the school staff.

Implementation – How do we translate our vision into practice?

Ambitious – Planning a & Design

Our children follow a carefully structured Forest School curriculum which has been devised to ensure children know more, do more and remember more as they progress through our school.

Taught on a two-year rolling programme to accommodate mixed aged classes, its content is supported by advice, requirements and guidelines presented in Forest School Guidance and involves a teaching delivery which holds to six key principles that shape and govern the Forest School ethos.

These six principles are:

1. Regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; a cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
2. It takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. It uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.

4. It aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
5. It offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
6. It is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

Our Teaching Approach

Children participate in Forest School in blocks of lessons across the academic year which ensures children have opportunities for sustained periods of study and have time to embed and enhance their learning.

Pupils in EYFS and KS1 take part in a FS school session for a morning or afternoon each week throughout the academic year. In KS2, pupils participate in FS every 2 out of 3 weeks. This results in pupils accessing FS provision throughout each of the different seasons, which will have a natural impact on the type of experiences and activities they will experience.

Inclement weather is not a barrier to FS, and is used as an opportunity to tailor activities to promote awareness of, and deep connection to, the natural world.

Detailed medium-term planning supports learning, ensures continuity and carefully plans for progression and depth.

Our curriculum covers learning around several key themes:

- Creative development, exploration and play: mud kitchen, story circle, obstacle challenges, scavenger hunts, sculpture making, woodland games, geocaching.
- Navigation: site safety and boundaries, positional language, map reading, orienteering.
- Den/Shelter building: mini-dens, tripod, lean-to, tarpaulin, tipi, equipment care.
- Tool use and knot work: tools for woodland crafts, hapazome, talismans, worry catcher, mallet, range of knots including clove hitch and square lashing.
- Flora and fauna: knowledge of native flora, naming of fauna on site, minibeast knowledge, vegetable garden maintenance, sensory garden.
- Campfire safety and cooking: toasting marshmallows, making popcorn, roasting bread, frying pancakes and pizza, boiling water in a Kelly Kettle.
- Recognising Seasonal Change and Observing Weather

Relevant - Progression

- We use a Forest School Progression Document to secure the progressive use and application of skills in a range of contexts. The FS curriculum framework across each phase (EYFS, Key Stage 1, Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2) has been carefully mapped to set out the necessary skills and knowledge that will be taught, and how these essential concepts develop cumulatively throughout each unit.
- Meaningful links with other subjects are made where appropriate that allows for children to make links between current and previous learning. These logical connections are planned purposefully and explicitly to build the structure of our curriculum and enable staff to refer back to prior learning on which new layers of knowledge can be successfully laid.
- Our Forest School promotes child-led learning – allowing the child to choose which activities they engage with whilst offering progression in the development of skills and experiences.

Nurturing – Personal Development & Wellbeing

- SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development) as well as Character Education is a 'golden thread' that runs throughout the Forest School curriculum.

Creative – Teaching & Learning

- Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction play a key role in developing knowledge and skills so that children know more and remember more overtime across the FS curriculum.

- Throughout Forest School sessions, children will be offered the opportunity to engage with a variety of different activities each involving the study, awareness and use of the natural environment. Learning is captured in Tapestry - photographs and conversations are invaluable in enabling pupils to demonstrate their understanding.
- Children have opportunities to use high quality resources and materials to support their learning in the carefully designed Forest School areas on the school site.

Inclusive – Success for all

- FS lessons are designed to provide our pupils with the adaptations required to access the learning at all levels. FS Leaders ensure that any form of differentiation is appropriate and does not place a glass ceiling on learning for any child, no matter their ability or needs.

All children involved in the sessions follow the same expectations of behaviour and high standards as is expected in the classroom and regular discussions during introduction and reflection time provide opportunities for these expectations to become established.

Impact – What is the impact of our curriculum on the students? How will we know that our children are achieving?

Although not measurable in the normal academic sense, our FS curriculum does have clear end points and by the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the attitudes, skills and techniques specified in the relevant curriculum plans.

In addition, we measure the impact of our Forest School provision through the following methods:

- A celebration of learning for each term which demonstrates progression across the school (compilation of images in our electronic portfolio/Tapestry & display)
- Pupil discussions about their learning (Pupil Voice)
- A selection of questionnaires taken prior to sessions beginning and at the end of the academic year