

## What benefits will my child get from participating in Forest Schools?

Forest Schools supports the holistic development of the child:

- Health and fitness - Being active in an outdoor, natural environment.
- Increased emotional wellbeing - Being confident and self-reliant.
- Social development - Communicating, and negotiating with children and adults to solve problems and share experiences.
- Skills development - Developing fine and gross motor skills and coordination for real purposes.
- Gaining knowledge and understanding - Using all of our senses, problem solving and real-life learning.
- Individualised learning - Careful observation allows adults to tailor support to children's own interests and stage of development.
- Curriculum Links - Forest School supports many areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, National Curriculum, World Wide curriculum and the Every Child Matters agenda.

## Health and Safety

The health and safety of all participants is central to everything done within a Forest School programme. Forest School leaders are fully trained in risk assessment and emergency outdoor first aid. Forest School has;



Health and Safety policy; a seasonally and daily risk assessed site; risk assessments for activities; trained adult helpers; first aid and emergency equipment. Some of the activities the children may participate in are 'higher-risk activities' (such as campfire cooking or tool use), however, these activities are only available to the children once certain behaviours and boundaries are established. Children are encouraged and supported in recognising and managing risk for themselves, through real life situations and experiences.

# Forest Schools A Guide for Parents



**"This is the best kind of classroom,  
It's a journey through time and space,  
From the smallest seed to the largest tree,  
This is a Forest and a learning place.**

**This is the best kind of classroom,  
Where the seasons don't happen in books.  
Where the learning is watching and thinking  
and talking  
And everyone notices, everyone looks."**

*From 'The best Kind of Classroom' by Ian MacMillan*

## What is Forest School?

Forest School has developed from the Scandinavian education system and is about children and young people building self esteem and independence through exploring and experiencing the natural world. Forest School sessions will be run throughout the year by trained practitioners, within a natural environment (not necessarily a Forest!). Forest School is a mixture of learning new skills (e.g. knot tying) and exploring whilst playing in the outdoors. The sessions are planned to meet the needs of individuals to ensure that children grow in self-confidence and understanding

The ethos of Forest School encourages practical, hands-on experiences. It also allows adults to step back and observe the children in order to then encourage and inspire them to achieve and learn. It fosters a love and respect for the natural world.

## Where will my child be going?

Forest School is held within a local woodland/outdoor wild space. Part of the area will have been chosen as a Forest School site where there are designated areas for fire, tools, seating and play. Wildlife habitats will be developed. The sites are thoroughly risk assessed ensuring that current health and safety guidelines are being followed and the well being of your children is ensured. All sessions will be led by trained Forest School Leaders.



*"Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children and young people opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland environment."*  
National definition: by Forest School (England) Network

## What will my child be doing?

Forest School will run all year round and in all weathers (unless weather conditions are dangerous). The child led ethos of Forest Schools means that once at the site the children can choose what to participate in, carefully supported and encouraged by trained adults.

Forest School activities vary depending on the season. They may include

- Hunting for minibeast and/or pond dipping
- Natural crafts - crowns, dreamcatchers or collages from natural materials, weaving with long grasses, etc
- Mud sculptures
- Shelter building and knot tying
- Tree climbing
- Using tools for a purpose - such as peeling bark from sticks with potato peelers to make toasting forks.
- Fire building and cooking on a camp fire



Sessions are planned around the individual's and group's needs, and built upon each week. All Forest School Leaders are qualified through nationally recognised and accredited training, therefore ensuring Forest School is a high quality learning experience. The earlier sessions will concentrate on safety; establishing boundaries and routines. As the children develop in confidence and familiarity with the environment the sessions focus on developing and reinforcing skills and understanding.

We will regularly share your child's experiences at Forest School with you and would love to hear what they say about the sessions.