



Forest School Curriculum at Barrow CE Primary School



Forest School Intent

At Barrow CE Primary School, our Christian vision of “Let Your Light Shine” (Matthew 5:16) is central to our Forest School provision. We believe that every child is uniquely created with their own strengths, interests and potential, and Forest School provides a nurturing environment where every learner can flourish, develop confidence and discover their own unique gifts.

Following the Forest School ethos, we provide a child-centred and inspirational learning experience that supports the holistic development of the whole child through regular opportunities for play, exploration, discovery and supported risk-taking in the natural environment. Through meaningful experiences in God’s creation, children develop a sense of awe and wonder, a respect for the natural world and an understanding of their responsibility as caretakers of the environment.

Forest School at Barrow CE aims to develop children socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually. By providing time and space for learners to explore at their own pace, children develop resilience, independence, creativity and self-belief. They are encouraged to ask questions, solve problems, work collaboratively and reflect upon their experiences, enabling them to grow in confidence and let their light shine.

Through developing a deeper understanding of ecology, sustainability, conservation and woodland management, children learn to appreciate the importance of protecting the natural world and become responsible citizens who understand the impact of their actions on the environment and wider community.

Forest School Implementation

Barrow CE School Forest School Implementation

Our Forest School sessions are delivered using a learner-centred approach, with the needs, interests and developmental stages of each child shaping the experiences and opportunities provided. Through regular sessions in our woodland environment, children are given the freedom and support to explore, investigate and challenge themselves in a safe and nurturing space.

The Forest School approach develops the whole child through five key areas:

- **Empathy** – developing kindness, compassion and an understanding of the needs and feelings of others.
- **Social skills** – learning to communicate, collaborate and contribute positively within a group.
- **Self-awareness** – recognising personal strengths, challenges and individual achievements.
- **Self-motivation** – developing perseverance, curiosity and the confidence to try new experiences.
- **Self-regulation** – understanding emotions, managing risk and making thoughtful choices.

The Forest School Leader carefully observes each child and plans subsequent sessions to provide appropriate opportunities for challenge, support and growth. Children are encouraged to work at their own pace, recognising that every learner’s journey is unique and that each child has their own talents through which they can let their light shine.

Practical experiences are at the heart of Forest School and include activities such as den building, shelter construction, knot tying, tool use, natural crafts and fire lighting with appropriate supervision. Through these experiences, children learn how to assess and manage risks safely, developing courage, responsibility and resilience.

Children are encouraged to observe seasonal changes, explore habitats and develop an understanding of ecology, conservation and sustainability. These experiences foster a lifelong connection with nature and encourage children to become thoughtful stewards of the environment.

Reflection is a fundamental part of the Forest School journey. Through discussion and evaluation of their experiences, children develop metacognition – understanding how they learn, why they make choices and how they can continue to improve. This supports the development of confidence, communication and a positive sense of self.

At Barrow CE Primary School, we value the six key principles of Forest School:

1. Long-term, regular sessions.
2. A natural woodland setting.
3. Holistic development of the whole learner.
4. Supported risk-taking and challenge.
5. Sessions led by a qualified Forest School practitioner.
6. A learner-centred approach.

Whilst remaining faithful to these principles, we also use Forest School as a powerful extension of our wider curriculum, creating meaningful links with subjects such as science, geography,

art, mathematics and wellbeing. This enables children to apply their learning in real-life contexts and deepen their understanding through practical experiences.

Forest School Impact

The impact of our Forest School provision is evident in children who are confident, resilient and reflective learners with a strong sense of self and belonging. They demonstrate increased independence, improved emotional regulation and the ability to work collaboratively and compassionately with others.

Children develop practical skills including the safe use of tools, knot tying, shelter building and fire safety, showing responsibility and respect for themselves, others and the natural environment. They become increasingly confident in assessing risks, solving problems and adapting to challenges presented by the ever-changing outdoor environment.

Through play, exploration and hands-on experiences, children develop their physical skills, including coordination, balance, strength and fine motor control, while also developing creativity, curiosity and a willingness to embrace new challenges.

Forest School provides opportunities for every child, regardless of age, ability or starting point, to experience success and achievement. The inclusive nature of the approach ensures that all learners feel valued, supported and empowered to reach their potential.

By the time children leave Barrow CE Primary School, they will have developed a lifelong appreciation and respect for the natural world, a strong sense of responsibility towards caring for God's creation and the confidence, resilience and self-awareness to let their light shine in all areas of their lives.

Forest School Curriculum and Skills Progression

Note – Although this is split into year group, the Forest School ethos is about stage not age progress, about children making independent activity choices and does not necessarily tie in with a strict year group progress template. This should therefore be seen as a possible progression of skills and of introduction to different tools, ideas and resources rather than an expected and measured skill set.

Rules of Forest School – Look after: 1. yourself; 2. each other; 3. the forest.

Skills	Reception	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Safety & Risk assessment	This skill area is threaded throughout the whole Forest School curriculum as per Forest School principle 4 – “Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.”						
	Know what clothes to wear for Forest School. Get self changed and wellies on with support at start of year and independently at end of year. Follow instructions re activities and safety Begin to remember the Forest School Rules	Know Forest School Rules Begin to use tools safely (cf tool use) with supervision and support Begin to make own assessments of risk, make decisions about where to play based on own tolerance of (e.g.) mud, minibeasts and scratches.	Begin to lead small groups in activities, choosing who best to work with. Know the boundaries of safe play	Know how to use tools safely – following tool talks Develop leadership skills ensuring members of group follow safety rules and identifying potential risks in activities.			

<p>Shelter Building</p>	<p>Introduction of basic shelter building with support (some indoor and outdoor equipment)</p> <p>Mini-den building for small animals</p>	<p>Supported construction of tripod structures (mini-den building)</p> <p>Erect a lean to shelter, with support</p>	<p>Independent use of tripod structures (animal den building)</p> <p>Introduction to lashing and frapping techniques to make frames</p> <p>Create a lean to shelter, independently or with limited support</p>	<p>Create a tarpaulin shelter in a woodland</p> <p>Work successfully as a group, having considered and evaluated each members' contributions</p> <p>Compare and evaluate the shelters in relation to their sturdiness, durability, weatherproofing and whether it is fit for purpose</p>	<p>Design and build varying sized shelters using tarpaulin and materials found in a woodland</p> <p>Work successfully as a group, having considered and evaluated each members' contributions</p> <p>Compare and evaluate the shelters in relation to their sturdiness, durability, weatherproofing and whether it is fit for purpose</p>	<p>Create a tipi shelter with camouflage</p> <p>Work successfully as a group, having considered and evaluated each members' contributions</p> <p>Compare and evaluate the shelters in relation to their sturdiness, durability, weatherproofing and whether it is fit for purpose</p>	<p>Shelter building challenge – working in teams the children plan, build and review their shelters (recap the different ways to build shelters)</p> <p>Work successfully as a group, having considered and evaluated each members' contributions</p> <p>Compare and evaluate the shelters in relation to their sturdiness, durability, weatherproofing and whether it is fit for purpose</p> <p>Set up a tent in preparation for going on a residential visit</p>
<p>Geographical Skills and Navigation</p>	<p>Follow rules and boundaries</p> <p>Promote free exploration</p>	<p>Use simple compass directions (North, South, East and West)</p> <p>Use directional language (near and far; left and right)</p> <p>Describe the location of features and routes on a map</p> <p>Recognise landmarks and human and physical features</p> <p>Devise a simple map and use basic symbols in a key</p>	<p>Use simple compass directions (North, South, East and West)</p> <p>Use directional language (near and far; left and right)</p> <p>Describe the location of features and routes on a map</p> <p>Recognise landmarks and human and physical features</p> <p>Devise a simple map and use basic symbols in a key</p>	<p>Demonstrate understanding of the concept of a basic map</p> <p>Navigate your way around a simple orienteering course</p> <p>Understand the term 'orientate' or 'setting' a map</p> <p>Complete a simple 'star' orienteering activity in pairs / groups</p> <p>Record information accurately and neatly</p> <p>Follow rules when completing a star orienteering activity</p>	<p>Recognise features and symbols on the map</p> <p>Understand how to orientate the map</p> <p>Demonstrate understanding of a line orienteering course (short loop) and star orienteering</p> <p>Build trust with a partner and work together when orienteering</p>	<p>Use the eight points of a compass and four figure grid references</p> <p>Develop expertise in the orienteering skills of orientating a map, following a course, and recognition of relevant map symbols</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between pacing and distance</p> <p>Plan a short loop course for another pair to follow</p> <p>Improve confidence in map reading and the transfer of information from map to ground</p> <p>Apply skills of orienteering including thumbing the map, route choice and symbol recognition</p> <p>Plan the most efficient route so that the course is completed in the quickest time</p>	<p>Use the eight points of a compass, four and six-figure grid references, symbols and key (including the use of Ordnance Survey Maps)</p> <p>Further develop navigational skills by planning ahead, identifying problems and making decisions</p> <p>Learn to balance speed and accuracy</p> <p>Set, read and follow a bearing</p> <p>Practice and develop pacing skills</p> <p>Be able to take a bearing from a map and use that bearing to find a control point</p> <p>Combine map reading and compass skills</p> <p>Measure the distance between control points and, using the map scale, estimate the number of paces required to reach each control</p> <p>Successfully undertake an orienteering competition</p>

						Complete the orienteering course in the fastest time possible competing against others	using an unfamiliar map in a new location Demonstrate effective use of orientating a map, using a compass, setting, reading and following bearings, and scale to navigate around a score (scatter) orienteering course
Play / Exploring	Introduction to rules and boundaries Promotion of free exploration Promotion of independent learning opportunities/skills <i>Plant bulbs and watch them grow</i> <i>Autumn walk</i> <i>Search for butterflies</i>	Re-enforce rules and boundaries Travel safely over the terrain in Forest School Carry sticks safely Work in a team to co-operate and communicate clearly <i>Discover what's in a pond</i> <i>Hunt for insects</i> <i>Roll down a hill</i> <i>Build a den</i>	Re-enforce rules and boundaries of forest schools Move logs safely with support first <i>Build a bridge</i> <i>Become a nature detective</i> <i>Get soaking wet in the rain</i> <i>Bird watching</i> <i>Make a daisy chain</i>	Take part in outdoor challenges on own and in a team <i>Climb a tree</i> <i>Make something out of wood</i> <i>Cook outdoors</i>	Play woodland versions of games I can work in a team during wide games and scavenger hunts <i>Make a sculpture</i> <i>Treasure hunt</i>	<i>Orienteering with an OS map</i>	<i>Create a time capsule</i>
Using Tools	Introduction to tools (peelers for whittling, hammers, mallets, trowels and forks)	Continuation of the use of basic tools (cutting of string, peeler for whittling, bow saw to cut discs (1:1))	Continuation of the use of basic tools, larger ropes and independent cutting of string Use of bow saw 1-1 to cut discs and peelers for whittling	In Key Stage 2 children will develop their skills when using a range of tools. Tools will only be used when the children are physically, mentally and socially ready to do so. Children's ability to use tools will develop at different ages	In Key Stage 2 children will develop their skills when using a range of tools. Tools will only be used when the children are physically, mentally and socially ready to do so. Children's ability to use tools will develop at different ages	In Key Stage 2 children will develop their skills when using a range of tools. Tools will only be used when the children are physically, mentally and socially ready to do so. Children's ability to use tools will develop at different ages	In Key Stage 2 children will develop their skills when using a range of tools. Tools will only be used when the children are physically, mentally and socially ready to do so. Children's ability to use tools will develop at different ages
Additional tools introduced may include	Palm drills Bow Saw	Peeler(1:1) Hammers	Secateurs		Loppers Knives for whittling	Brace & bits pliers	
Knots	Able to tie 'a knot' in string.	Introduction to basic knots – overhand, figure 8, cow hitch	More sophisticated use of knots for attaching to structures and trees Example - Overhand knot and half hitch Lashing and frapping techniques to make frames – using elastic bands	More sophisticated use of knots for attaching to structures and trees Lashing and frapping frames and 3D structures. Beginning to use string (instead of elastic bands) Reef knot	More sophisticated knots for attaching to structures and trees Independent use of lashing and frapping techniques	Shelter hitches and knots More complex knots and selecting the correct knot for a job Marlin spike hitch Introduce different knots depending on interests and ability e.g. bowline, prusik climbing knot.	Shelter hitches and knots More complex knots and selecting the correct knot for a job Marlin spike hitch Introduce different knots depending on interests and ability e.g. bowline, prusik climbing knot.

Fire	<p>Observe and talk about fire lighting procedures, begin to contribute by selecting fuel</p> <p>Safety procedures – fire safety</p>	<p>Be safe around a fire</p> <p>Contribute to fire lighting by gathering fuel</p>	<p>Experience using fire strikers to spark a flame</p> <p>Light a piece of cotton wool (fairy pillow)</p> <p>Fire safety and the fire triangle</p>	<p>Light a fairy fire and keep it going</p>	<p>Roast food on a fire with support</p>	<p>Cooking on a camp fire (roast food)</p> <p>Make and tend a fire safely</p> <p>Prepare and light a campfire with supervision</p>	<p>Cooking on a camp fire (roast food)</p> <p>Make and tend a fire safely</p> <p>Prepare and light a campfire with supervision</p>
Forest, Flora & Fauna Knowledge	<p>Evergreen/Deciduous</p> <p>Find minibeasts and name some with adult support.</p> <p>Name some common plants</p> <p>Seasonal changes</p>	<p>Best places for hiding</p> <p>Identify some common minibeasts.</p> <p>Know where to find some common minibeasts</p> <p>Differentiate between common trees by leaf.</p>	<p>Know how trees spread seeds and identify different types of seed.</p> <p>Start to use ID charts to identify flora and fauna with adult support.</p>	<p>Best trees for climbing</p> <p>Identify some trees in school grounds</p> <p>Begin to understand terms flora and fauna</p> <p>Know where to find different plants in our forest.</p>	<p>Best places for den building</p> <p>Use ID charts/apps to identify unknown flora and fauna with less adult support</p> <p>Use apps to identify e.g. plants, invertebrates & birdsong.</p>	<p>Best trees/plants for resources</p> <p>select own resources</p> <p>Identify most trees in school grounds</p> <p>Use ID charts independently with some success</p> <p>Know how to help wildlife appropriately and sustainably</p>	<p>Foraging – know some uses of plants and which are unsafe</p> <p>Know what flora and fauna mean</p> <p>Know what maintenance our plants need and be able to help with that maintenance</p>
Tree climbing	<p>balance on stump</p>	<p>balance on a log while walking</p>	<p>knowledge of rules of tree climbing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Only climb yourself. Do not help anyone else up or down a tree. 2. Do not use ropes or external aids to climbing. 3. Always maintain three points of contact with the tree. 4. Climb to a maximum height of 4 metres. (This is an insurance limit) 5. Only use branches which are thicker than your wrist. 6. Stay near the main tree trunk. 7. Avoid climbing when trees are very wet. 	<p>identify safe branches - Alive, thick enough</p>	<p>plan route up and down a tree</p>	<p>Climb and descend without help</p> <p>select safe tree for climbing</p>	<p>Plan a route up and down from the ground</p>
Games	<p>Follow simple game rules</p>	<p>Make game suggestions based on prior knowledge</p>	<p>Make suggestions of games learnt elsewhere</p>	<p>Adapt games learnt elsewhere to fit Forest School</p>	<p>Initiate game playing as part of free time in Forest School</p>	<p>Suggest amendments to taught games</p> <p>Able to categorise a game according to its rules (e.g. bulldog style, cumulative tagging)</p>	<p>Devise own games for Forest School</p>

Art / Creative	Follow simple instructions to make Forest crafts		Begin to develop pre-learnt skills to plan and create own ideas		Select from examples to decide on own desired product	Modify example ideas into own outcomes	Use tools etc safely to complete own creative activities.
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Other Curriculum Links

At Barrow CE Primary we strive to consolidate other areas of the curriculum through the holistic philosophy of Forest School learning. Examples of cross curricular links include:

English – story telling,

Maths – arrays, counting, general maths in the environment, shape

Science – KS1 plants, seasonal changes; KS2 forces, light, sound, changing state.

Geography – mapping, field study

History – Vikings, Stone Age, Ancient Greeks

Music – singing songs, making musical instruments

PE – team games

Computing – video,

Art – natural ephemeral art

DT – tool skills