

An Introduction to Forest School

What is Forest School?



Forest School is a type of outdoor education in which children use natural spaces to learn personal, social and technical skills. It offers children opportunities to achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning in a woodland environment.

Forest school uses the woods and other outdoor spaces to build independence and self-esteem in children and young adults. Topics are cross-curricular (broad in subject) and include the natural environment, for example the importance of trees, recognition of specific plants and animals and understanding how to take care of the local environment. The woodland environment can also be used to learn about more abstract concepts such as mathematics and communication.

What does my child need for Forest School?

Children can wear their own clothes to school on Forest School days.

- Old clothes are best and lots of layers may be needed in colder weather.
- Long trousers are essential – jogging bottoms are better than jeans as they provide a warm layer without restricting movement.
- Wellington boots have no insulation so consider adding liners or extra thick socks for colder days. Please ensure all clothing is clearly named.
- Children should wear shoes to school that they can put on and take off independently e.g. school shoes or velcro trainers.
- Long hair **MUST** be securely tied back.



Please send your child to school with the following in a NAMED carrier bag:

- **Wellington Boots** (with liners or extra socks).
- **A waterproof coat and trousers** (or an all-in-one suit)
- **A warm hat and gloves** on colder days (with no 'dangly' bits if possible as these can be dangerous around campfires and when exploring)

We have a few spare waterproofs and wellingtons in class, so please let us know if you are unable to supply any of these items

What will my child do at Forest School?

The activities that can take place during sessions are very varied. They are set by the Forest School Leader based on observations of the children's interests and needs. The children are encouraged to explore, experiment and problem solve in their own way and at their own pace. Typical activities can include:

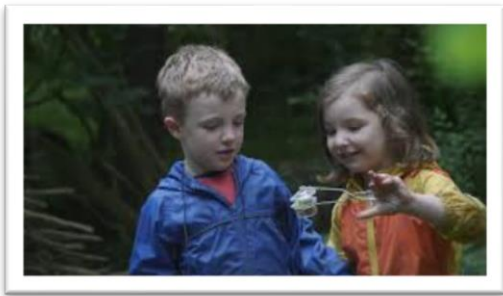
- Sensory walks
- Foraging
- Shelter building
- Mini beast hunts
- Tree climbing



- Campfire cooking
- Woodwork
- Nature art
- Games like Hide and Seek
- Fire building and lighting
- Puddle and mud jumping

What are the benefits of Forest School?

Forest school helps children develop many skills that can be difficult to learn in the classroom. It is very physical, encouraging children to be active, with lots of activities to develop both fine and gross motor skills.



Children learn to assess, appreciate and take risks, making sensible, informed decisions about how to tackle the activities and experiences they encounter. They learn to be self-sufficient and take care of themselves, which boosts their confidence and self-esteem. Through trial and error they learn to deal with failure and develop the resilience to keep trying: a vital skill in the classroom as well as outside.'

Forest school ties in with many areas of the curriculum. For example, being outdoors helps children learn about weather and the seasons, which are part of *Understanding the World*, working on tasks like den

building and constructing with natural materials links with *Expressive Arts and Design*

Children also benefit from the simple act of being outdoors. Research has shown that it improves mental and spiritual health, communication skills and social relationships, among other things. Connecting with nature helps children feel part of the world around them and develops their knowledge and skills in looking after their environment.

Is it safe?

Safety is paramount during forest school sessions. All leaders have to have Level 3 Forest School qualification, which covers essential safety training such as risk assessment, use of tools, fire safety and food hygiene. Mrs Adams is an experienced Level 3 Forest School Leader and regularly runs sessions at Rode Heath School and other settings throughout the UK.

Staffing levels are higher for Forest School sessions and for some activities, children are even supervised one-to-one.

Although children are encouraged to assess risk for themselves, this is always with close adult guidance. Before any activity, a circle time is used to remind children of the rules and to encourage them to discuss how they can stay safe.



We are really looking forward to starting our sessions. As always, should you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us.