



# Forest School

Why is it so important?



## What is Forest School?

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

**Taken from the *Forest School Association***



## Activities available for children include:

- Tree climbing
- Den building
- Natural printing
- Jewellery making
- Making animal habitats
- Cooking on the fire
- Making hot chocolate
- Bug and wildlife hunts
- Using various tools safely



## New skills will include:

- Collaboration
- Perseverance
- Responsibility
- Independence
- Listening and attention
- Fire safety
- Tool safety
- Supervised risk taking







- Forest School is a place where children have fun in a natural woodland area.
- It is a place where risk- taking and independent learning is encouraged.
- Forest School is also a great place for **bonding** with classmates, **sharing** new experiences, being **creative** and great for **Physical Development; Personal, Social and Emotional Development** and a place to explore and care for our **environment**.
- Adults take the role of the observer during sessions and are there to support and encourage children to make their own choices.

**Here, some Year R children are using simple tools to make a pencil using wood harvested from our Forest School area**

# Principles of Forest School





**Principle 1: 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.**

What the Forest School Association say:	What our sessions will look like:
Forest School takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Our sessions are every week, on a Monday.</li><li>• I run the sessions with the same class each term. Each Forest School day is divided into the morning session (2 hours) and the afternoon session (2 hours).</li><li>• No more that 15 children will attend a session.</li></ul>
A Forest School programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children will be taught the necessary skills to help build their confidence as the sessions progress.</li><li>• Sessions will be evaluated by the Forest School leader to inform future sessions.</li></ul>
The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At the beginning of each term, I will ask the class what they want to learn about. This will enable me to learn their interests and give me some ideas to base the proposed programme on.</li><li>• Each group (am and pm) may wish to do different activities and choose to learn</li></ul>

## Principle 2: 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.

### What the Forest School Association say:

Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for Forest School, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good Forest School practice.

The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.

A Forest School programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/manager, the forest school practitioner and the learners.

Forest School uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

### What our sessions will look like:

- We are lucky to have a designated Forest School area on site that I am developing.
- Children have the opportunity to explore the area during each session.
- The Forest School Lead has completed a 3 year management plan for the Forest School site and created an Environmental Impact Matrix to identify possible areas of impact.
- During the sessions we talk a lot about the environment-how we are the visitors to the site and what we can do to look after it.

### Principle 3: Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

What the Forest School Association say:	What our sessions will look like:
Where appropriate, the Forest School leader will aim to link experiences at Forest School to home, work and /or school education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Forest School leader will take children's own interests into account when suggesting tasks and activities</li><li>• Photos and information about each session is shared with parents via Tapestry to show parents what their children have been doing.</li></ul>
Forest School programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children are able to undertake a range of activities at forest school. Just a few activities available to children at our sessions are:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tree climbing (physical)</li><li>• Using hand tools (physical)</li><li>• Knots (physical, cognitive)</li><li>• Braiding (physical, cognitive, social)</li><li>• Reflection on sessions (linguistic, emotional, social, spiritual)</li><li>• Listening walks (linguistic, emotional, social, spiritual)</li><li>• Mud painting (Cognitive, social)</li><li>• Den building (Cognitive, social)</li><li>• Natural printing (Physical, social)</li><li>• Cooking (physical, social)</li></ul></li></ul>



## Principle 4: Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

What the Forest School Association say:	What our sessions will look like:
Forest School opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Forest School activities should be child-led and centred around the learners.</li><li>• Activities will be set up for children to try if they wish to, or they may choose to explore and try a different activity.</li><li>• All sessions will be held on the school grounds in our Forest School area (situated behind the Year One classrooms).</li><li>• No child will be left unsupervised.</li><li>• Children will be encouraged to take supported risks and be assured that thorough risk assessments have been taken out.</li><li>• All tools used will be age appropriate for the child's year group.</li></ul>
Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.	
Any Forest School experience follows a Risk–Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.	

## Principle 5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

### What the Forest School Association say:

Forest School is led by qualified Forest School practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 Forest School qualification. Find more information on Forest School qualifications [here](#).

There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.

Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.

Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric (if appropriate) and outdoor elements.

Forest School is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running Forest School and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.

The Forest School leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.

### What our sessions will look like:

- I am currently working towards my Level 3 Forest School Leadership qualification.

- Each session will be lead by me (the Forest School Lead) and at least one other adult- employed by the school. Either a class teacher or a teaching assistant.

- Each adult is already employed by the school and have all the appropriate documents and checks in place as per the school's employment policy/rules.

- Mrs Donovan (Forest School Lead) is paediatric and outdoor first aid trained.

- Mrs Donovan (Forest School Lead) has completed relevant risk assessments, environmental impact matrix, 3-year management plan and written an extensive handbook for Forest School.

- Each session is evaluated by me, Mrs Donovan.
- I have kept a reflective diary of my own Forest School journey.



## Principle 6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning

### What the Forest School Association say:

A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by Forest School that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.

The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building.

Play and choice are an integral part of the Forest School learning process, and play is recognised as vital to learning and development at Forest School.

Forest School provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.

Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.

Practitioner observation is an important element of Forest School pedagogy. Observations feed into 'scaffolding' and tailoring experiences to learning and development at Forest School.

### What our sessions will look like:

- Each session is planned and risk assessments have been completed
- Each session is evaluated by me, Mrs Donovan. This is used to inform future sessions based on the individual interests and needs of the group.
- Children are given the opportunity to choose their own activity- I, the Forest School lead will guide them on what is possible and provide the correct resources.
- As the Forest School lead, I will share skills learned during her own training to build confidence and knowledge.
- There is a lot of time for play during our Forest School sessions and opportunities to explore the area independently without being told what to do.
- Clear rules and boundaries are set at the beginning of each session to set expectations and trust to take sensible risks.



# Play at Forest School



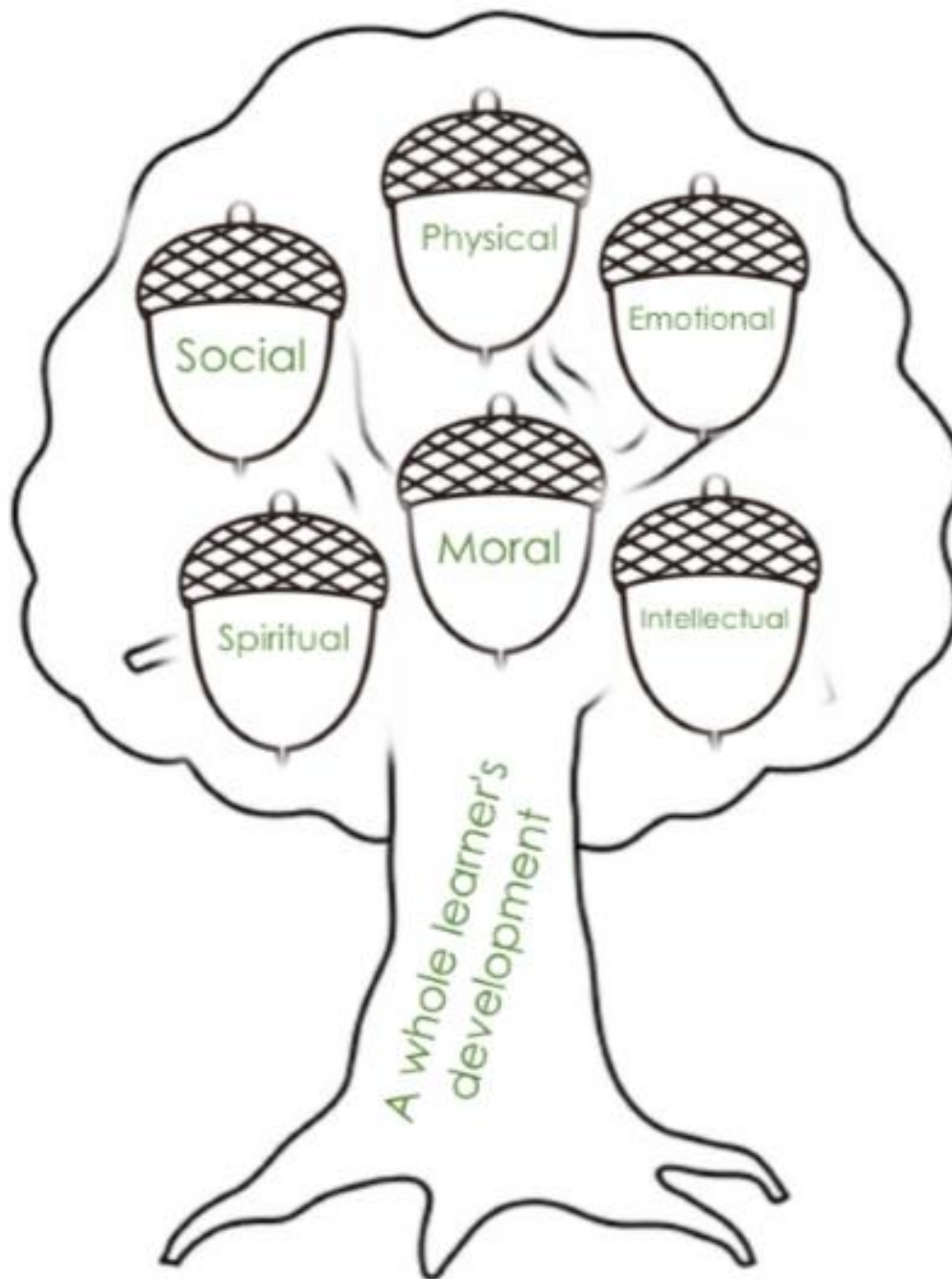
	Play type	Summary	Examples from own Forest School
1	Social	Social interactions where all parties are following the same rules.	All children playing a game of hide and seek. All children working together to build a den.
2	Socio-dramatic	Using own experiences in their play.	Playing house in the trees. Using natural objects to create a potion.
3	Rough and tumble	Using lots of energy. Physical play but not ending up in injury.	Chasing games. Stuck in the mud game. Free time.
4	Exploratory	Handling, manipulating and moving objects.	Mixing mud paint. Rope swing.
5	Object	Using something for its purpose. Finding out how something works.	Making paintbrush with a stick and leaf and using it. Using various tools to create an object.
6	Creative	Designing, exploring, changing and adapting and trying different ideas.	Nature kebabs. Leaf crowns. Clay faces.
7	Communication	Talking, singing, acting, playing group games	Listening for group gathering call. Acting out roles. Games involving others.
8	Deep	Taking risks, overcoming fears, developing survival skills.	Climbing trees. Minibeast hunt. Using tools. Fire lighting. Assault courses.
9	Recapitulative	Exploring own history, learning how things used to be done. Learning stories and rhymes.	Learning stories and rhymes. Fire lighting.
10	Symbolic	Using an object to symbolise something different.	Using a stick as a sword Using a strip of card as a crown.
11	Fantasy	Make believe and letting your imagination run wild.	Using the trees as a den. Pretending to be a giant. Building a raft using logs.
12	Dramatic	Assigning roles to play and acting it out.	Acting out stories or social experiences.
13	Imaginative	Play where conventional rules do not apply.	Mini den building for dinosaurs. Imaginative play- pretending to be an animal.
14	Locomotor	Moving for fun, running, jumping, climbing.	Tree climbing Den building- carrying large logs Allowing children to have free time to explore
15	Mastery	Controlling physical attributes in the environment.	Den building Digging holes Lighting a fire Allowing free time to explore
16	Role Play	Doing 'real' things with real objects.	Gardening using real tools and gardening gloves. Using an iPad to take photographs of the environment.

	Summary	Examples from own Forest School
Adventure	Children should have the opportunity to balance, jump and move in different ways.	Climbing trees Crawling Assault courses Building rope swings Rope ladders Taking risks
Fantasy and imagination	Children should have the chance to use their imaginations, act out and tell stories.	Roleplay Making a stage for performances Creating puppets and characters using natural and found objects. Building a puppet theatre using sticks and ropes to perform with.
Animal Allies	Children should be given the chance to care for, look for and observe wildlife to enable them to understand them.	Minibeast hunts Bird boxes Making bird feeders Building bug hotels
Paths and maps	Children should have the opportunity to explore local environments and understand local geographical sites.	Free time to explore the area Creating a map of the site Designing a new area for the Forest School site
Special places	Children should have the chance to build dens, create hideouts and have a place to call their own.	Creating own seat around fire circle Den building Hideouts in trees
Small worlds	Children should have access to resources to build mini ecosystems and miniature worlds.	Mini den building Creating ecosystems using natural objects
Hunting and gathering	Children should have free time to explore and get to know their environments.	Treasure hunts Collecting and gathering natural objects Hide and seek



# Benefits of Forest School





### Physical development and well being

- Forest School gives children a chance to try den building, tree climbing, building swings, using tools to improve fine and gross motor skills.
- Activities outside can help increase in stamina and fitness levels plus help children to develop their co-ordination.
- Developing a love for the outdoors could create healthier lifestyles in the long run.

### Social and Emotional development (Self-esteem, confidence, emotional intelligence, resilience, spiritual development)

- Nature is a place we all belong.
- In these modern time, too much time is spent indoors, on devices and we are overly reliant on technology.
- Forest school allows children to take supported risks, children can guide own learning at their own pace and children have more autonomy on own learning
- Forest school is a level playing field and gives children an equal opportunity to learn and develop skills
- It is a low pressured environment where there are no right and wrong answers.
- Children can bond and forge friendships as the work as a team and join in with group activities.
- There are lots of opportunity for 'wow' moments .

### Intellectual development (creativity & independent learning)

- Forest School allows children to develop problem solving skills by realising there can be more than one way to do something.
- There are no wrong answers at Forest School, no one will be mocked for trying something that doesn't work out.
- Children are given the chance to test out own theories and ideas.
- There is no set answer or agenda, given the freedom to create and make something using own ideas
- Forest School ignites creativity in learners and leaders.





What the children  
said about Forest  
School...

"We used leaves to make nature kebabs and necklaces & pencils."

Ted

"I loved it when we  
were roasting  
marshmallows."

Lucas

"The trees were good to  
hide in."

Isobel

"I liked picking up  
leaves and making  
pencils using the tree. "

Naomi

"The hot chocolate  
was really fun."

Xanthe

"I liked the tool-box  
and using the tools"

Charlie

"I liked climbing up the  
trees."

Stanley

"No pick, no lick!"

Izzy

"I like playing with my  
friends."

Isla



What the parents  
said about Forest  
School...

"Thank you! Isla really enjoyed Forest School, she was very excited to tell us about it especially how she saved a worm!"  
Parent in Ladybirds

"Jnanesh told that he loved it and he learnt to be safe." Parent in Bumblebees

"Thank you so much for enabling the children to do Forest School, I know Jacob really enjoyed it."  
Parent in Dragonflies

"Xanthe loved climbing the trees and can't wait to have the 'fire on' when it gets colder. Thanks for the great opportunity." Parent in Bumblebees

"Milly had a fabulous time she wanted to go back today." Parent in Caterpillars

"Best day ever! According to Joshua!"  
Parent in Caterpillars

"This is such a great thing to do. I bet they loved getting muddy."  
Parent in Caterpillars

"Maia had the best time thank you. She loved tree climbing and can't wait for the real fire!"  
Parent in Bumblebees

"Looks like the had so much fun. Immy said she really enjoyed it!"  
Parent in Bumblebees

"Thank you. Holly loved it." Parent in Ladybirds

"Carter had the BEST day!" Parent in Ladybirds

"Emily hasn't stopped talking about it! Thank you for giving them this lovely opportunity." Parent in Bumblebees

"So fantastic! Leo wants everyday to be a Forest School day!" Parent in Bumblebees

(taken from Tapestry)