

# Forest School

## What is Forest School?

Albert Einstein said that 'Play is the highest form of research.' Forest School sessions allow children to engage playfully with the natural environment, in all weathers and seasons. It is a place where children can experience 'fabulous struggles', build their self-esteem and resilience, with the ultimate goal of increasing their well-being, and knowing themselves and the world better. The possibilities are infinite within the endless variety found in nature – just try and find two sticks that are the same and you will see!

Nursery and Reception children have a Forest School session once a week throughout the year. This is essential as the ethos of Forest School understands that relationships in a group and development of all aspects of a child's learning are processes that take time.

## What happens in Forest School?

Children are equipped with all the clothing that they need to be safe in the outdoors. Even the task of getting waterproof trousers and wellies on provides wonderful learning opportunities!



Forest School sessions are planned with the specific cohort in mind, thinking of their needs; physical, emotional and intellectual. We gradually develop skills over time, alternating between an adult led session one week and then a free flow session the other week. For example, during one session the teacher may observe that the children love playing hide and seek as they become more confident in the environment. The next week, the teacher may model to the children how to make arrow trails to find something special.

Bushcraft elements such as making fire, using tools, observing the natural environment and setting up shelters can all be part of Forest School sessions. Equally, wonderful sessions can happen without these, as the adults respond to the children's interests and encourage the creation of stories, games or natural pictures.



Teachers aim to plan play based, holistic sessions, with quality adult input. Holistic is the understanding that an activity can hit a range of learning areas simultaneously. Forest School leaders often refer to these as SPICES: Social, Physical, Intellectual, Communication, Emotional and Spiritual. So for example, building a shelter requires cooperation (social); strength, spatial awareness and potentially fine motor skills (physical); understanding of length, weight and balancing (intellectual); overcoming frustration or setbacks (emotional); the sense of achievement or flow in the collaboration (Spiritual). Part of the adult's job is to help children reflect effectively (and creatively) on all these aspects of learning.



An example of a planned activity:

## Activity 5a Den building on a small scale

Location: Outdoor learning, Forest School



Resources, props and visuals:

- 3 x Little Pig toys
- Sticks from the FS

### Prior class-based experience

Knowledge of Three Little Pigs fairy tale  
Use of a range of construction toys  
Problem solving as part of a small group.

### Subject focus

Learning to take changes in our routine in our stride.  
Learning the boundaries and Forest School rules, to feel safe and confident in FS. To follow simple instructions.  
To problem solve, making changes and adaptations to create a structure.



1. Make a basic pyramid structure, pushing sticks into ground.



2. Make the structure stronger by adding more sticks.



3. Large branches at base enable children to lay additional sticks.



4. Encourage children to discuss progress and future improvements.



5. Evaluate final structure are the pigs safe from the wolf?

### Links to Nursery Curriculum

PSE 'I can show confidence in asking adults and my peers for help.'  
Physical 'I can dress with help and manage to wash and dry my hands independently.'  
Communication and Language 'I can listen to others one to one or in small groups.'

### Links to Reception Curriculum

PSE 'I can work independently or as part of a group and understand and follow rules.'  
Physical 'I can manage my own personal needs successfully, including dressing.'  
Communication and Language 'I can follow instructions involving several actions.'

### Links to text



Den building using a variety of materials.