

What is Forest School?

The philosophy and roots of the Forest Schools movement can be traced through a number of sources as far back as the 19th century. These include the ideas of progressive educationalists such as Pestalozzi, Rousseau and Froebel, the woodcraft movements, the Native Americans, and the Quakers.

In the UK in 1928 a Forest school was formed in the New Forest. The two founding organisations, 'Woodcraft Movement' and 'Forest School Camps' still exist today. In the 1950's it was developed in Sweden, building independence and self-esteem through hands on play in a woodland setting. The Swedish concept was then further developed by Scandinavia and other European countries and established in Denmark in the 1980's. It was then brought to the UK in the mid 1990's after a visit by Nursery Nurses from Somerset and Early years professionals from other parts of the UK. Denmark has a similar climate to ours and this outdoor approach to learning had a huge impact on the development of children.

A 13 month study of Swedish children found the FS children far happier to their urban cousins; more balanced with greater social capacity, fewer sick days, more able to concentrate and have better coordination, have higher self-esteem and self-confidence and be able to work as part of a team.

Forest School is holistic learning through play and exploration. Children learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and to use their own initiative to solve problems and cooperate with others. During Forest School sessions throughout the year, children will learn to build a shelters, help to light fires for cooking and use green woodworking skills and tools to create and build objects from the woodland around them.

Forest School sessions encourage children to:

- Develop personal and social skills
- Work through practical problems and challenges
- Use tools to create, build or manage
- Discover how they learn best
- Pursue knowledge that interests them
- Learn how to manage failures
- Build confidence in decision making and evaluating risk
- Develop practical skills
- Understand the benefits of a balanced and healthy lifestyle
- Explore connections between humans, wildlife and the earth
- Regularly experience achievement and success
- Reflect on learning and experiences
- Develop their language and communication skills
- Improve physical motor skills
- Become more motivated
- Improve their concentration skills

Forest School Clothing

To ensure that the children are sufficiently protected from the weather and the forest environment we require children to be wearing appropriate clothing and footwear. Clothing will get muddy so old home clothes are required. Forest School sessions will take place in all weathers unless the safety of the participants is in question, due to high winds or icy ground.

'There is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.'

The general rule is to wear lots of layers which keep in the heat and can be removed if needed. Suitable clothing is essential for everyone participating. We need to be adequately dressed in order to gain the full learning potential of the session. In their kits, children should have:

- Long sleeved tee shirt, even in warm weather to help protect against bites, stings and scratches.
- Trousers to reduce the risk of bites, stings and scratches.
- Waterproof over trousers or dungarees and a waterproof jacket (really important when wet to prevent under clothing getting wet/damp as we have no-where to dry clothing between sessions).
- Long socks, wellies, walking boots or old trainers (in very hot dry weather)
- During the summer, a sunhat and sunscreen should be supplied
- During the colder months, extra layers such as a fleece, leggings, tights, hats and gloves etc are required.

Children should bring in and leave their Forest School clothes in a bag (clearly marked with their name) in their classroom. All Forest School Kit should be taken home throughout the year (once a half term or term) to be washed and brought back in.

Warning- there is a high risk of your child getting muddy and enjoying it!

