

## **Forest School Long Term Plan**

### **Introduction**

The Forest School curriculum offers a unique, child-centred approach to learning that fosters holistic development through regular sessions in natural outdoor environments. Rooted in the principles of experiential education, Forest School encourages exploration, risk-taking, creativity, and connection with nature—allowing children to grow in confidence, resilience, and independence.

Unlike traditional classroom settings, Forest School is guided by the belief that the outdoors provides rich opportunities for meaningful, hands-on learning. Sessions are typically learner-led, allowing children to follow their own interests and rhythms while being supported by skilled practitioners who facilitate, observe, and scaffold learning.

The curriculum integrates key areas of personal, social, emotional, and physical development, alongside opportunities to support curriculum-linked learning in subjects such as science, literacy, mathematics, and the arts. Whether building shelters, using tools safely, identifying plants and wildlife, or storytelling around a fire, every experience is carefully designed to nurture curiosity, collaboration, and a deep respect for the natural world.

Forest School is not just an outdoor play program—it is an educational philosophy and a long-term process that supports children in becoming capable, confident, and environmentally conscious learners, ready to face the challenges of the wider world.

### **Aims**

#### **Promote Holistic Development**

Forest School supports the development of the whole child—emotionally, socially, physically, cognitively, and spiritually. It recognizes that learning isn't just academic but includes creativity, resilience, empathy, and self-awareness.

#### **Foster Confidence and Independence**

Through learner-led activities and real-life problem solving, children develop self-confidence, autonomy, and the ability to make decisions independently in a supportive environment.

#### **Encourage a Deep Connection with Nature**

By spending regular time in natural settings, learners develop a lasting respect and appreciation for the environment, cultivating environmental stewardship and sustainable values.

#### **Support Risk-Taking and Resilience**

Forest School provides a safe but challenging space where children are encouraged to assess and take appropriate risks, helping them build resilience, perseverance, and emotional regulation.

## **Enhance Communication and Social Skills**

Group activities, cooperative tasks, and shared reflection time promote teamwork, empathy, listening skills, and positive social interaction.

## **Enable Lifelong Learning and Curiosity**

With a focus on process over product, Forest School ignites natural curiosity and intrinsic motivation, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and creativity.

## **Provide Child-Led, Play-Based Learning Opportunities**

Forest School puts the learner at the centre, allowing them to explore, experiment, and discover through play and self-directed inquiry.

## **Promote Physical Health and Wellbeing**

Regular outdoor activity improves physical health, coordination, and mental wellbeing, helping reduce stress and support emotional regulation.

## **Careers, SMSC, British Values**

### **Careers Education (Gatsby Benchmarks / Skills for Life)**

Forest School nurtures a range of employability and life skills, particularly in younger learners or those with SEND, by offering practical, real-world experiences that lay the foundation for future aspirations:

- **Problem-solving & decision-making** – through tool use, shelter building, and team challenges
- **Teamwork and communication** – essential for most careers, practised through group tasks
- **Leadership and initiative** – learners take ownership of activities and make independent choices
- **Exploring career pathways** – exposure to nature-based roles (forest ranger, conservationist, outdoor educator, horticulturist)
- **Enterprise and responsibility** – older pupils might run forest events, make crafts, or manage small-scale woodland projects

**Gatsby Link:** Meets elements of Benchmarks 2, 3, 4 and 8 (especially in linking curriculum learning to careers and experiences of the workplace).

### **SMSC Development**

Forest School is an excellent vehicle for developing the whole child, particularly across all four strands of SMSC:

- **Spiritual** – Connects learners to the natural world, encouraging reflection, awe, and appreciation of life beyond the self
- **Moral** – Teaches responsibility for nature, respectful use of tools, and ethical decision-making in risk assessment
- **Social** – Encourages teamwork, collaboration, leadership, and shared responsibility
- **Cultural** – Promotes understanding of different cultural relationships with nature (e.g., Indigenous knowledge, seasonal celebrations), and inclusivity in a shared outdoor space

Forest School supports inclusive participation, helping all learners (including those with SEMH, ASD, and communication needs) feel valued and successful.

## **British Values**

Forest School naturally embeds the fundamental British values through its ethos and structure:

<b>British Value</b>	<b>How It's Embedded in Forest School</b>
<b>Democracy</b>	Children choose activities, vote on group decisions, and reflect together in circles.
<b>Rule of Law</b>	Boundaries and safety rules are established and reinforced; learners help create their own rules.
<b>Individual Liberty</b>	Learners are encouraged to make their own choices and take ownership of their learning journey.
<b>Mutual Respect</b>	Group tasks require cooperation; learners are taught to respect each other, wildlife, and the space.
<b>Tolerance of Different Faiths &amp; Beliefs</b>	Forest School celebrates diverse traditions and seasonal customs, fostering respect and understanding.

## **Links to subject areas**

**Science** – life cycles, habitats, seasons

**Maths** – measuring, estimating, patterns in nature

**Literacy** – storytelling, descriptive writing, phonics games

**Geography** – maps, orienteering, land use

**Art and DT** – sculpture, design, and natural materials

## Long Term Curriculum Map

	<b>Autumn 1</b> <b>An introduction to Forest School</b>	<b>Autumn 2</b> <b>Construction (Dry Land)</b>	<b>Spring 1</b> <b>Navigation</b>	<b>Spring 2</b> <b>Tools and Practical Skills</b>	<b>Summer 1</b> <b>Cognitive &amp; Creative Development</b>	<b>Summer 2</b> <b>Fire cooking and survival</b>
<b>Cycle 1 2025 - 2026</b>	<p>Learn about my local environment inside and outside school</p> <p>Be able to build connections with nature</p> <p>Be able to Identify a range of materials, plants and animals</p> <p>Gain an ecological awareness and conservation</p> <p>Be able to identify animals and plans</p> <p>Understand "Leave-no-trace" principles</p> <p>Develop a respect for living things</p>	<p>Be able to use a range of natural materials and tools to protect ourselves and others (including animals) from the elements</p> <p>Be able to develop and demonstrate skills e.g. tying knots, safe handling of tools</p> <p>Introduction to Outdoor Skills and safety</p> <p>Basic Knot tying for Outdoor Safety</p> <p>Building a Shelter with Natural Materials</p> <p>Safe Handling of knives and cutting tools</p> <p>Creating tools from natural materials</p> <p>Fire Making and Heat Protection</p> <p>First Aid and Animal Protection</p>	<p>Be able to find your own way in a safe space (local environment)</p> <p>Be able to develop resilience and problem-solving – navigating through woodland environments</p> <p>Gain an understanding of space, landmarks, and natural cues</p>	<p>Be able to take safe risks with support</p> <p>Be able to use a range of tools and materials to create useful objects / resource / art</p>	<p>Problem-solving and critical thinking Imagination and role-play</p> <p>Storytelling and narrative building</p> <p>Develop social skills</p>	<p>Be able to recall and follow fire safety routines</p> <p>Be able to help prepare and light a fire safely</p> <p>Be able to use fire to cook simple food outdoors</p> <p>Be able to explore simple survival skills</p> <p>Be able to use tools to support survival activities</p> <p>Be able to reflect on resilience, teamwork and achievement in survival activities.</p>

	<b>Autumn 1</b> <b>Understanding our environment</b>	<b>Autumn 2</b> <b>Tools and Practical Skills</b>	<b>Spring 1</b> <b>Cognitive &amp; Creative Development</b>	<b>Spring 2</b> <b>Navigation</b>	<b>Summer 1 / Summer 2</b> <b>Construction (Water)</b>
<b>Cycle 2</b>	<p>Learn about the wider environment inside and outside school</p> <p>Be able to build connections with nature</p> <p>Be able to Identify a range of materials, plants and animals</p> <p>Gain an ecological awareness and conservation</p> <p>Be able to identify animals and plans</p> <p>Understand "Leave-no-trace" principles</p> <p>Develop a respect for living things</p>	<p>Demonstrate safe handling and use of tools (e.g., knives, peelers, hammers, saws)</p> <p>Demonstrate knowledge of Woodcraft and bushcraft</p> <p>Be able to tie knots and build shelter</p> <p>Be able to light fires</p>	<p>Problem-solving and critical thinking Imagination and role-play</p> <p>Storytelling and narrative building</p> <p>Develop social skills</p>	<p>Be able to find your own way in a wider environment (prepared)</p> <p>Be able to develop resilience and problem-solving – navigating through a range of different environments</p> <p>Gain an understanding of space, landmarks, and natural cues</p>	<p>Be able to use a range of natural materials and tools to travel from one place to another over water</p> <p>Be able to develop and demonstrate skills e.g. tying knots, safe handling of tools</p>

	<b>Autumn 1</b> <b>Understanding our environment</b>	<b>Autumn 2</b> <b>Navigation</b>	<b>Spring 1</b> <b>Tools and Practical Skills</b>	<b>Spring 2</b> <b>Cognitive &amp; Creative Development</b>	<b>Summer 1 / Summer 2</b> <b>Construction (Student Led Project)</b>
<b>Cycle 3</b>	<p>Learn about the different environments inside and outside school (Europe &amp; the wider world)</p> <p>Be able to build connections with nature</p> <p>Be able to Identify a range of materials, plants and animals</p> <p>Gain an ecological awareness and conservation</p> <p>Be able to identify animals and plans</p> <p>Understand "Leave-no-trace" principles</p> <p>Develop a respect for living things</p>	<p>Be able to find your own way in an unfamiliar environment</p> <p>Be able to develop resilience and problem-solving – navigating through a range of different terrain</p> <p>Gain an understanding of space, landmarks, and natural cues</p>	<p>Demonstrate choosing the right tools to independently and successfully complete a range of challenges</p>	<p>Develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills</p> <p>Imagination and role-play</p> <p>Be able to use effective communication skills</p>	<p>Be able to use a range of natural materials and tools to meet a purpose (scenarios / challenges)</p> <p>Be able to develop and demonstrate skills e.g. tying knots, safe handling of tools</p> <p>Demonstrate choosing the right tools to independently and successfully complete a range of challenges (water and land)</p>

## Assessment

### Forest School Skills Assessment – SEN Learners

Learner Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Key Adult/Support: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Session Focus: \_\_\_\_\_

Area	Skill Observed	<u>Not Yet (NY)</u>	<u>With Support (WS)</u>	<u>Independently (I)</u>
<b>Emotional Regulation</b>	Can express feelings safely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Uses calming strategies (e.g., breathing, sensory breaks)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Manages changes or transitions in activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Communication &amp; Interaction</b>	Makes choices (e.g., tools, materials)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Communicates needs (verbally/signs/gestures/PECS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Engages in parallel or cooperative play	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sensory &amp; Physical</b>	Explores natural textures/sensory materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Moves safely in outdoor space (walking, climbing, crawling)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Participates in movement-based activities (balancing, lifting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Cognition &amp; Focus</b>	Attends to a task for short periods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Follows simple instructions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Explores cause and effect (e.g., pouring, building, knocking down)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Nature &amp; Environment</b>	Shows interest in natural items (e.g., leaves, bugs, water)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Demonstrates care for living things or the environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Responds to changes in weather/seasons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



#### **Key:**

- **Not Yet (NY):** The learner does not currently show this skill.
- **With Support (WS):** The learner can do this with adult support or prompts.
- **Independently (I):** The learner consistently shows this skill without help.



#### **Strengths and Positive Observations:**



#### **Next Steps / Targets:**