

Forest School at Stapleford Community Primary School



"This is the best kind of classroom,
It's a journey through time and space,
From the smallest seed to the largest tree,
This is a Forest and a learning place.

This is the best kind of classroom,
Where the seasons don't happen in books.

Where the learning is watching and thinking and talking
And everyone notices, everyone looks."

From 'The best Kind of Classroom' by Ian MacMillan



What is Forest School?

Forest Schools has developed from the Scandinavian education system and is about children and young people building self-esteem, independence and a love of science and nature through exploring and experiencing the natural world. Forest Schools is a long term programme delivered by trained practitioners within a natural environment (not necessarily a Forest!). Each Forest School programme is tailored to meet the needs of individuals within that group and is continuously developed as the children/young people grow in confidence, skills and understanding. The ethos of Forest Schools allows learners the time and space to develop skills, interests and understanding through practical, hands on experiences. It also allows practitioners to step back and observe the children/young people in order to then encourage and inspire individuals to achieve through careful scaffolding and facilitating.

What Forest School is not:

- Any class session where learning takes place outside – outdoor learning takes many forms, Forest School is just one of these.
- A privilege or extra playtime.
- A bush craft or outdoor survival lesson.

Where and when will my child be going?

Here at Stapleford Primary School, we are very lucky to have our own wild area at the Moat, this is where our sessions will take place – although we may also use the field for certain activities such as larger running games. Forest School sessions will take place on Thursday mornings and sessions will be approximately 2 hours long. The initial programme will run for the duration of the final summer term. We hope the weather to be good at this time of year, but please do send children in weather appropriate clothing and expect the children to come home mucky! Part of the risk assessment is that children wear long legs and long sleeves – I know this may be warm at this time of year, but it may prevent them taking part in certain activities if they are not covered on their arms and legs.



“Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children and young people opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland environment.”
National definition: by Forest School (England) Network

What will my child be doing?

The Forest School routine varies depending on how children respond to each session, however it will start by preparing to go out by dressing in outdoor clothes such as waterproofs, singing special songs or sharing stories. Forest Schools will run all year round and in all weathers (unless weather conditions are dangerous). The child led ethos of Forest Schools means that once at the site the children can choose what to participate in, carefully supported and encouraged by trained adults. Possible activities may include:

- Hunting for minibeasts
- Natural crafts – making necklaces from elder, crowns or dreamcatchers from willow, collages from natural materials, weaving with long grasses, tree cookies, etc.
- Mud sculptures
- Shelter building and knot tying
- Tree climbing
- Using tools for a purpose – such as peeling bark from sticks with potato peelers to make toasting forks.
- Fire building and cooking on a camp fire.

Children are not limited to the activities provided – these are simply a scaffold.

The children are free to use the resources provided, environment and imagination to lead their own learning. Sessions are planned around the individual's and group's needs, and built upon each week. All Forest School Leaders are qualified through nationally recognised and accredited training, therefore ensuring Forest Schools is a high quality learning experience. The earlier sessions will concentrate on safety; establishing boundaries and routines. As the children develop in confidence and familiarity with the environment the sessions focus on the development and consolidation of skills and understanding.





What benefits will my child get from participating in Forest Schools?

Forest Schools supports the holistic development of the child:

- Health and fitness – Being active in an outdoor, natural environment.
- Increased emotional wellbeing – There is research available to support increased levels of resilience, confidence and general wellbeing.
- Social development – Communicating, and negotiating with peers and adults to solve problems and share experiences.
- Skills development – Developing fine and gross motor skills and coordination for real purposes.
 - Gaining knowledge and understanding – Multi-sensory, real-life learning.
- Individualised learning – Careful observation allows adults to tailor support to children's own interests and stage of development.
 - Curriculum Links – Forest Schools supports many areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, National Curriculum and the Every Child Matters agenda.
 - Being better placed to learn and handle the requirements they experience in the classroom and in wider life.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of all participants is central to everything done within a Forest Schools programme. Forest School leaders are fully trained in risk assessment and emergency outdoor first aid. Every Forest School will have; a Health and Safety policy; a seasonally and daily risk assessed site; risk assessments for activities; trained adult helpers; first aid and emergency equipment. Some of the activities the children may participate in are 'higher-risk activities' (such as campfire cooking or tool use). However, these activities are not available to the children until certain behaviours and boundaries are established. Children are encouraged and supported in recognising and managing risk for themselves, through real life situations and experiences.

How parents can help

- Make sure your child has the right clothing for the weather
- Please let us know if you would like to help out for any of these sessions. We would really value your support.
- Ask your children questions and feed back to us if you would like to.