

What is Forest Schools?

Forest Schools has developed from the Scandinavian education system and is about children and young people building self esteem and independence 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.



Where will my child will be going?

We are fortunate enough to be surrounded by an area that lends itself to forest schools teaching approaches. We will be visiting both Badger Wood and Keeper Wood sites around West Heslerton, as well as using our school grounds and the local area. All sites are safe; they are thoroughly risk assessed and managed appropriately by school staff.



What will my child be doing?

Your child will be experiencing a wide variety of multisensory experiences within the natural environment. The sessions will run in all weather conditions (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 dream catchers from willow, collages from natural materials, weaving with long grasses, making tree cookies.
- Mud Painting and sculptures
- Digging
- Shelter building and knot tying
- 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

Sessions are planned around the individual's and group's needs, and built upon each week. 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 supporting this.
- 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 all areas of the National Curriculum and Early Years Foundation Stage.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of all participants is central to everything done within a Forest Schools programme. 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.

"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

Forest Schools

at

West Heslerton CE 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