

# Forest School Newsletter



St Jude's  
Catholic Primary School





*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*

Forest School is an inspirational process, that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.

The Forest School Association



## What is Forests School?

Forest Schools have been developing in UK schools over the past twenty years, inspired by Scandinavian Early Years Provision, where contact with the environment is a natural part of family life. Forest School has been developed to educate the 'whole child' building self-esteem and emotional intelligence through playing, exploring and experiencing a woodland environment.

The sessions will be held in the woodland area of St Jude's School on a Tuesday. Each week the day will be divided into a morning session for half the class and an afternoon session for the remaining children. As the school afternoon is shorter than the morning the children will alternate between morning and afternoon sessions so that all the children have the same amount of time outside.



The sessions will be delivered by a trained Forest School Practitioner, Dr Sara Collins, with the help of ST Jude's teaching assistants. Sara is a biologist, Forest School Practitioner and expert den builder. She has worked with Primary School children in Portsmouth for seven years and is an 'Accredited Practitioner' of the Institute for Outdoor Learning. Sara always explains that she is a scientist not a medical doctor to avoid hearing stories about hospital visits or being shown impressive scabs.



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Each Forest School programme is tailored to meet the needs of individuals within that group and is continuously developed as the children grow in confidence, skills and understanding.

The ethos of Forest Schools allows children the opportunity to grow emotionally and physically in a woodland environment. The sessions are child led enabling the children to choose which activities they are interested in. Children who make their own choices are more motivated to learn and more likely to develop their social and emotional skills through practical hands-on experiences. The sessions allow practitioners to step back and observe the children so that they can encourage and inspire individuals to achieve small but challenging achievable tasks.





## What will my child be doing?

The Forest School routine varies depending on the season. Forest Schools run all year round and in all weathers (unless weather conditions are dangerous). Sessions are planned around the individual's and group's needs, and develop further each week. The earlier sessions concentrate on safety; establishing boundaries and routines. As the children develop in confidence and familiarity with the environment the sessions focus on the development of skills and understanding.

The Year 4 sessions will also link activities from the class topic of Native American culture and traditions. As Native Americans we would be able to recognise plants and animals and understand how we rely on nature to survive. We will learn Tipi etiquette and use a traditional talking stick. We will practise making fires and tell stories while we enjoy a warming drink.



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

Forest Schools supports the holistic development of the child:

- Health and fitness - Just by being outside and active.
- Increased emotional wellbeing - enjoyable sessions giving positive experiences.
- Social development - Talking with friends and adult volunteers to work together and share experiences.
- Skills development - hands on activities, small but challenging achievable goals.
- Gaining knowledge and understanding - Learning by doing using all learning styles.
- Individualised learning - Careful observation and evaluation enables the Forest School practitioner to tailor support to the child's interests and stage of development.
- Curriculum Links - Forest Schools supports many areas of the school curriculum.



## Health and Safety Concerns

### Health and Safety

The health and safety of all participants is an important part of Forest School. 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; first aid and emergency equipment. Children are supported in recognising and managing risk for themselves, and by doing so they learn to respect the safety of others. Some of the Forest School activities are 'higher-risk activities' (such as campfire cooking or tool use). However, these activities are not available to the children until they demonstrate their understanding of the behaviour necessary to keep themselves and those around them safe.

