



St Michael's
C.E. Primary School

Forest School Curriculum



"Courage to Flourish in the Love of God"

Intent

At St Michael's C.E. Primary School, Forest School is an important part of our EYFS curriculum. It gives children regular opportunities to learn beyond the classroom, explore the natural world and develop confidence, curiosity and resilience. Through rich first-hand experiences, children strengthen their language, independence, physical confidence, cooperation and sense of responsibility for God's world.

In Nursery and Reception, Forest School supports the prime areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development and physical development. It also strengthens children's understanding of the world through practical experiences of seasons, weather, plants, animals, materials and the local environment.

Children revisit key knowledge and skills over time so that they develop confidence, independence and a sense of responsibility for the world around them. Forest School links with the wider EYFS curriculum where appropriate, particularly through learning about seasonal change, growth, animals, plants, maps, journeys, the local environment and caring for the natural world.

Implementation

Forest School is taught through regular outdoor sessions. Children wear waterproof all-in-one suits and wellies so that they can explore freely in all weather conditions, including mud, rain and wet grass.

In Nursery, Forest School begins in the spring term once children are settled into routines and have developed confidence with adults, peers and the wider Nursery environment. Reception children access Forest School across the year, building on their prior outdoor learning and developing greater independence over time.

Sessions include adult-led teaching, child-led exploration and opportunities for children to reflect on what they have noticed, found, made or learned. Adults model key vocabulary, safe routines, careful observation, respect for nature, appropriate risk-taking and curiosity about the local environment.

Learning is progressive. Nursery children begin by developing confidence, routines, sensory exploration and simple care for the natural world. Reception children build on this by developing greater independence, wider vocabulary, teamwork, problem-solving, observation, simple investigation and environmental responsibility.

Adults use observation and interaction during Forest School to respond to children's needs, observations and next steps, while ensuring that key knowledge and skills are revisited over time.

Forest School sessions are planned with appropriate risk assessment, clear boundaries and adult supervision so that children can learn to manage simple risks safely and confidently.

Links to the EYFS Curriculum

Forest School supports the EYFS curriculum by providing purposeful opportunities for children to apply learning outdoors. It particularly supports:

Area of Learning	How Forest School Supports Learning
Communication and Language	Children learn and use vocabulary linked to seasons, weather, plants, animals, materials and the environment. They ask questions, explain ideas and talk about what they notice.
Personal, Social and Emotional Development	Children build confidence, independence, resilience, cooperation and respect for living things.
Physical Development	Children develop balance, coordination, strength, fine motor control and safe movement across varied outdoor surfaces.
Understanding the World	Children observe seasonal change, plants, animals, minibeasts, habitats, materials and environmental care.
Expressive Arts and Design	Children use natural materials creatively to make patterns, pictures, models, shelters and imaginative play spaces.
Mathematics	Children sort, compare, count, notice patterns, use positional language and explore shape, size, measure and capacity outdoors.
Literacy	Children develop language for storytelling, retelling, mark making, signs, maps and labels in meaningful outdoor contexts.

Inclusion and Adaptation

All children access Forest School. Adults adapt routines, language, resources, groupings and support so that children with SEND, disadvantaged children, EAL learners and those with lower starting points can participate successfully.

Adaptations may include visual instructions, repeated routines, adult modelling, simplified language, sensory support, smaller group work, adapted equipment and additional adult support. Adaptations support access without lowering ambition.

Progression of Knowledge

Aspect	Nursery Spring	Nursery Summer	Reception Autumn	Reception Spring	Reception Summer
Safety	Forest School is outside and adults help us stay safe.	We follow simple routines to explore safely.	Forest School has rules and boundaries to keep everyone safe.	We can explain why some outdoor activities need care.	We can manage simple risks with adult support.

Seasons and weather	The weather can change when we are outside.	Weather can be wet, dry, sunny or windy.	Autumn and winter have signs we can notice.	Winter changes into spring.	Spring changes into summer.
Plants	Plants can be found outside.	Plants can grow and need water.	Trees and plants look different in different seasons.	Trees have parts such as bark, trunk, branches and leaves.	Plants grow from seeds or bulbs and need water, light and care.
Animals and minibeasts	Some living things are found outside.	Minibeasts live in soil, grass and gardens.	Some creatures live in leaves, logs, soil and trees.	Living things need food, water and shelter.	Minibeasts live in different habitats and have different features.
Materials	Natural materials include leaves, sticks, stones, mud and water.	Natural materials can be used to build and create.	Natural materials have different colours, shapes, sizes and textures.	Some materials are better for building than others.	Some materials float, sink, bend, break or change.
Environment	We must be gentle with living things.	We help to look after outdoor spaces.	We care for nature by not damaging plants or habitats.	Habitats must be treated carefully.	Pollution and rubbish can harm animals and the environment.

Progression of Skills

Aspect	Nursery Spring	Nursery Summer	Reception Autumn	Reception Spring	Reception Summer
Communication	Name familiar natural objects.	Use words or short phrases to talk about what they find.	Use descriptive words to describe natural materials and weather.	Ask questions and explain what they are making or noticing.	Explain observations, changes, predictions and reasons.
Listening and understanding	Follow simple instructions with adult support.	Join in with routines and respond to simple signals.	Listen and respond to safety instructions.	Follow two-step instructions in familiar outdoor tasks.	Listen, respond and contribute during reflection.
Physical development	Walk, run, squat, dig, pour and carry.	Balance, climb, crawl and move around obstacles.	Move safely on uneven, wet or muddy ground.	Carry, build, balance and climb with increasing control.	Negotiate obstacles and use resources purposefully.
Fine motor and tools	Scoop, pour, collect, pick up and mix.	Use hands and simple resources to plant, water and build.	Manipulate leaves, sticks, stones, mud and natural objects.	Use simple tools and materials with increasing control.	Select and use tools/resources for a chosen purpose.

Social skills	Play alongside others.	Begin to share and take turns with adult support.	Work with a partner or small group.	Cooperate, take turns and share ideas.	Solve simple problems as part of a group.
Observation	Notice obvious features.	Notice simple changes.	Sort and compare natural materials.	Look closely and describe what they notice.	Observe over time and explain changes.
Creativity	Explore and combine natural materials.	Build simple homes, tracks or models.	Create pictures, patterns and models.	Design and build shelters or story trails.	Plan, adapt and improve creations.
Reflection	Say what they liked or found.	Talk about what they made or enjoyed.	Talk about what they noticed.	Talk about what worked well or was tricky.	Talk about what they learned, improved or can now do.
Risk-taking	Explore new outdoor experiences with adult support.	Try simple physical challenges with encouragement.	Begin to recognise safe and unsafe choices outdoors.	Explain why some activities need care and control.	Manage simple risks with adult support and increasing independence.

Assessment and Responsive Teaching

Assessment in Forest School is purposeful and manageable. Adults use observation, interaction and professional knowledge to notice how children use vocabulary, follow routines, manage risks, move physically, cooperate, solve problems, explore and care for the natural world. Adults respond in the moment through modelling, questioning, scaffolding, vocabulary support and additional practice. Where children need support or challenge, adults adapt routines, resources, groupings and adult interaction so that all children can participate successfully and continue to build confidence, independence and knowledge over time.

End Points

By the end of Nursery, children will be able to:

- join in with Forest School routines with adult support;
- wear waterproof all-in-one suits and wellies for outdoor learning;
- respond to simple safety instructions;
- explore natural materials using their senses;
- name some familiar outdoor objects, such as leaf, stick, stone, mud, water and flower;
- move safely around the outdoor area;
- begin to share and take turns;

- show care for plants, animals and outdoor spaces;
- talk about what they have found, made or enjoyed.

By the end of Reception, children will be able to:

- follow Forest School routines and boundaries with increasing independence;
- manage waterproof all-in-one suits, wellies, resources and routines with increasing independence;
- explain simple ways to stay safe outdoors;
- use vocabulary linked to weather, seasons, plants, animals, materials and habitats;
- observe, compare, sort and talk about natural objects;
- use natural materials creatively and purposefully;
- work with others to build, investigate and solve problems;
- use simple tools and resources safely with adult supervision;
- explain what plants and living things need;
- show care for the environment;
- reflect on their learning and talk about what they can now do.