



Holy Cross Pre school Forest School



Introduction

Forest School, so
what's it all about?

Forest School,
who's it for?

“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.”

Forest School (England) Network.

The philosophy of Forest School is to encourage and inspire individuals of all ages through positive experiences and participation in engaging, motivating and achievable tasks. Taking part in activities in woodland helps children and young people to develop a connection and respect for the natural world, promoting both physical and mental. Forest schools believe all children should be regularly interacting with nature.

The sessions will differ in execution with varying group and learning objectives but will always involve visits to our forest area where children will take part in activities and games, making use of the natural environment.

Research has found that the benefits for young people of all backgrounds in attending Forest School sessions are:

- ❖ Increased self-confidence and self-belief
- ❖ Development in social skills and awareness of their actions on others
- ❖ Increased language and communication skills
- ❖ A keenness to participate — motivation and concentration
- ❖ Improved stamina and gross and fine motor skills
- ❖ Development of respect for and interest in the natural environment

The Forest School approach focuses on the process of learning rather than the outcomes. Time allows for repetition, the development of confidence as well as the consolidation and transfer of skills.



Depending on the age of the children, activities could include:

Nature detectives, bug hunts, woodland art, den making, tool use, fire lighting, tracking skills, story- telling, orienteering, sensory exploration and much, much more!

In all aspects of our Forest School children are encouraged to respect the natural environment.

The learning that takes place at Forest School is based in play and exploration and is built upon week-on-week. Children are encouraged to take ownership of their woodland space and in the first sessions time will be spent getting to know the area.

Due to the nature of the Forest School ethos we remain flexible in the make-up of the session. If a child shows a particular interest or is drawn to something, we will follow their agenda and encourage them to build on their discoveries.

Forest School sessions are designed to be structured but not directive. Throughout their time at Forest School the children will be involved in woodland art and other projects that can be taken back to school or home. We find this encourages them to talk about and remember their days and gets the whole family or school involved in their Forest School experiences.

Forest School is, by its nature child-led so children will participate in some guided activities but also experience the wonders of free play in the challenging woodland environment.

Children will also be taught to make informed choices, use their own initiative to solve problems, co-operate with others and learn to evaluate risks.



The Forest School leader will plan and run the sessions, taking into consideration all the health and safety issues that could arise and will inform teachers and parents clearly of their role.

The role of the Forest School leader is to boost and develop children's self-esteem, self-belief and confidence by suggesting small, manageable tasks and ensure that they have time and freedom to learn at their own pace without pressure.

They will model appropriate behaviour at all times and encourage children to develop a greater awareness of their own and other's emotional needs.

In addition, the Forest School leader will be responsible for liaising with all interested parties, completing health and safety and risk assessments, following policies and procedures, administering any first aid and maintaining the first aid kit, counting equipment in and out and maintaining tools.

Forest School leaders will always take into consideration the specific needs of a particular group or individual. The leader will ensure that every child is respected as an individual, that bullying is not tolerated and that the rules and guidelines are followed. In the event of an emergency they will direct the group to safety.



Safety of everyone in the sessions is of paramount importance. Risk assessments are carried out for every aspect of Forest School, from individual

activity assessments to daily site checks before any group arrives. We have clear policies and procedures to ensure that everyone involved is working from the same guidelines. Our Forest School leader is trained to dynamically evaluate as the sessions take place and will always ensure children are not only safe but feel secure in the woods.

The Forest School leader will also make certain that clear safety guidelines are explained and adhered to as required for the environment or activities that are taking place. Whenever possible the group will be encouraged to get involved in setting the safety rules for the camp and surrounding areas.

One of the core aspects of Forest School is to equip children with self-esteem and confidence to be able to assess risks for themselves and make appropriate decisions. The leader is qualified in first aid and carries appropriate first aid kits, mobile phone and location details.

Forest School is designed to be a stimulating environment. Woodlands by their very nature are wild places and not sterile or totally risk-free. We don't want to take the thrill and adventure out of an important experience. However, we take all measures to reduce unnecessary risk for children and workers.

If you have any concerns about your child's safety please contact us and we will be happy to answer your questions. All risk assessments, policies and procedures are contained are available to view and are frequently updated, If you wish to view them we are pleased to provide you with these.