

Forest School Vision Statement

We aim to deliver weekly forest school sessions in our local woodland all year round. We want to offer children experiences in natural woodland where they can begin to make a lifelong connection with nature. Children will develop understanding and respect for wildlife, plants and the woodland ecosystem as a whole. They will develop sustainable and conservation attitudes, which we hope develops lifelong passions for protecting nature and our planet. We aim to foster a spiritual connection to nature and each other. Sessions are run with a 'leave no trace' philosophy. We leave the woodland as we find it.

Sessions are run on the same site so participants can observe seasonal change in plants and trees and develop deep level understanding of the same animal habitats and woodland ecosystem. Children will make links with their learning at forest school and the wider curriculum and beyond. Mastering greater understanding for human and natural systems.

Personal responsibility and equality are at the heart of our ethos, children are encouraged to help each other, carry equipment, look after the woodland and contribute to shared experiences such as fire or den building. Children will enjoy a snack during each session, sometimes this may be cooked on the campfire or Kelly kettle. This fosters a sense of 'togetherness' and community.

Sessions aim to provide children with time and space to follow their own lines of inquiry in a truly natural environment. Sessions are fun and children are given ample opportunities to play.

Children will develop independence skills, taking responsibility for packing their equipment and making their own resourcing choices. Children will learn how to manage risks, problem solve and make sustainable decisions. The sessions aim to build confidence and resilience as children are encouraged not to give up and to find solutions to problems themselves.

Children are encouraged to use their imagination through storytelling, natural art, woodwork and crafting projects. Fine motor skills are developed through dressing appropriately, tying knots, using tools and making crafts. Gross motor skills are developed through walking through uneven terrain, climbing fallen trees and playing games.

The SEND children to access weekly sessions all year round will benefit from learning how to work together, gaining confidence with new places, textures and foods. These children need exposure to unplanned and unstructured time as well as the 'unknown'. They will benefit from the array of sensory feedback a natural woodland environment offers, such as leaves rustling, wind in their face and the swinging in a hammock.

These SEND many of whom have an ASD diagnosis are children aged 4-7 and are only just beginning to learn that learning together is fun. These children need more practice at cooperative games that are highly enjoyable and motivating which will develop a positive attitude to shared learning experiences. Spending time playing together in the woodland will support them to learn social interaction skills whilst having fun. Children will develop social interaction skills and gain confidence through play, games and teamwork. Children will learn and use new vocabulary and develop their communication skills.

