

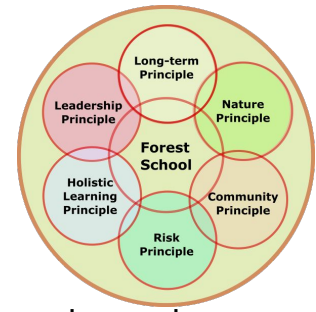
Forest School at Monks

“The best kept classroom and the richest cupboard are roofed only by the sky.”

Margaret McMillan, 1925



Forest School Ethos and Principles



- Forest School is a child led approach that offers opportunities for holistic growth. Focusing on play and exploration, supporting risk taking, whilst building confidence, self- esteem and resilience.
- Forest School is defined by 6 core principles that are used as a set of National Standards that all Forest School Leaders can aspire to.
- Forest School is a long term process of frequent and regular sessions set in a woodland or natural environment. With the children having the opportunity to experience the different seasons for a minimum of 2 hours.
- It helps learners develop socially, emotionally, physically, intellectually and spiritually.
- The aim is to develop a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- Focus on the child's curiosity and interests and exploring their own pace.
- It's an ethos, not just an activity, building resilience and lifelong learning skills beyond traditional classroom confines.

Why Forest School

A report in 2016 revealed British children are among the most housebound and screen addicted in the world, with three in four spending less time outdoors than the recommended daily period of outdoor exercise for prisoners – and more than half being unable to identify a British oak tree.

UK primary-aged children (5-11) engage with screens for an average of over 6 hours daily, with usage rising from roughly 2 hours 45 minutes for 8-year-olds to over 4 hours for 11-12 year-olds. Over 50% of 5-7 year-olds own a tablet, and 99% of households with children have internet access, driving high consumption of streaming, social media, and gaming.

Research from The Association of Play Industries shows a sharp decline in opportunities for outdoor play as children move through primary school. While most early years classes have daily outdoor play, this falls dramatically by Key Stage 2 - with only around 10% of schools providing daily outdoor play at this stage.

Play-based learning is nearly universal in EYFS (98%), but drops dramatically to just 27% in KS1 and 10% in KS2. Outdoor teaching time shrinks: Half of respondents spend over 50% of their EYFS lesson time outside; in KS2, it's only 1.5%.

97% of teachers believe outdoor play is critical for children to reach their full potential, and 88% report that children are happier and more engaged in learning after playing outside. (Source Outdoor Classroom Day)

Forest School at Monks

Our session is split into two parts beginning at 11.30 and ending at 3.15/3.25. The first part of our session is an opportunity to get physical and explore their environment. The children will play a game either on the school grounds or in the meadow. This game may focus on team building, gross motor skills, critical thinking or observation skills.

After lunch children will have the opportunity to participate in a planned activity. This activity is likely to be linked to the child's current learning within the curriculum. For example Year 3 were learning about the Stone age, some of the activities planned were to create a mammoth and provide a habitat for it, make their own mud paint and create some stone age style painting, make some Stone age jewellery.

We also provide opportunities for tool use, making fires and cooking, learning a variety of knots and shelter building.

A integral part of a Forest School session is children having the time, space and freedom to explore and play. Play is a vital part of learning and development and gives children the opportunity to express themselves freely, self regulate, problem solve, manage emotions, build confidence, develop social skills and improve their overall physical health. At the end of each session the children enjoy a snack and a warm drink whilst reflecting on their session and what it means to them.

Fires and Tools

Forest school is often only thought of as making fires and the learner using tools. Whilst this is an extremely exciting opportunity for the learner it is only a small part of their Forest School journey.

Children will be able to use tools (appropriate for their age) and help with the fire lighting process if the Forest School leader deems it safe to do so.



Some of the types of things that will be incorporated into these two areas are

- Cooking a meal- safety of cooking over a fire, considering good hygiene, preparation skills and methods of cooking.
- Tools- sawing wood, whittling with knives, using hand/palm drills and mallets and hammers.

Being trusted with real tools empowers children, boosting their self-esteem and creating a sense of achievement. Handling tools develops fine motor skills, dexterity, and hand-eye coordination. Tools encourage problem-solving and focus as children engage in construction and engineering, which often leads to a "calm" or "mindful" state.



Classroom Benefits

- Improved Cognitive & Academic Performance: Forest School provides sensory experiences that help make abstract classroom concepts tangible. Children can engage in practical science, math, and literacy, improving focus and attention, which transfers back to the classroom.
- Enhanced Behavior & Concentration: The unstructured, natural environment provides a calmer, less pressured space, which helps children, including those with SEND, improve emotional regulation, reduce anxiety, and develop better attention spans.
- Increased Independence & Self-Belief: By taking safe risks and directing their own play, children build confidence and resilience. This autonomy translates into a more proactive approach to learning in the classroom.
- Improved Social Skills: Working together on, for example, building a den or creating shelters improves communication, cooperation, and empathy.
- Physical Development: Active exploration develops gross motor skills (movement) and fine motor skills (using tools), which helps children stay focused during seated classroom work.



