



BISHOPS DOWN
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Parents' Guide To Forest School



What is Forest School?



Forest School is a long term outdoor programme of activities delivered by trained practitioners within a natural environment and whatever the weather! Our programme will be tailored to meet the needs of the children as they grow in confidence, skills and understanding. The ethos of Forest School allows learners the time and space to develop skills, interests and understanding through practical, hands-on experiences. It also allows practitioners to step back and observe the children in order to then encourage and inspire individuals to achieve through careful scaffolding and facilitating.

Where will Bishops Down Forest School be taking place?

We are fortunate to have a large and varied outdoor area that includes a woodland walk, a pond, growing gardens, outdoor classroom and soon, a fire pit area. The children will learn more about these varied habitats and the animals that live in them. The school grounds also back on the Hurst Woods, a wonderful ancient woodland, managed by the Woodland Trust and some sessions will take place there. We will ensure that, at every session, the children are secure in their understanding of the boundaries and of our Forest School rules. Both areas have been thoroughly risk assessed and this will be updated regularly.

Who will be staffing the Forest School?

Mrs Bell is a qualified Level 3 Forest School Practitioner and will be assisted by Ms Fennell who is Level 1 qualified and working towards her Level 3 qualification. They are passionate about the great outdoors and the benefits of Forest Schooling for all children. As part of their courses they have been trained in delivering Forest School sessions, in tool use and fire safety, outdoor First Aid, den building and the environment. They will be supported by Vicky Tuson, a parent helper, who has real interest and expertise in this area.

To make the children's experiences even richer, please come along and join us. The more volunteers the better!

Health and safety

The health and safety of all participants is central to everything undertaken within a Forest School Programme. Forest School leaders are fully trained in risk assessment and emergency first aid. The Forest School operates under the school's Health and Safety policy and policies and procedures regarding safeguarding and confidentiality. In addition:

- risk assessments for activities
- informed adult helpers
- First Aid and emergency equipment

Some of the activities the children may participate in are 'higher-risk activities' (such as tool use). These activities, however, are not available to the children until certain behaviours and boundaries are established. Children are encouraged and supported in recognising and managing risk for themselves, through real life situations and experiences.

What sort of activities will go on at Forest School?

The first sessions will focus on core skills and safety. Activities will increase week on week and may be linked to Topic, Geography or Science to include: games; storytelling; natural art activities; exploring, nature watching and bug hunting; climbing, rolling; practical woodland skills (e.g. willow weaving); building dens; time to be quiet, reflect or talk.

What benefits will my child get from participating in Forest School?

Forest School supports the holistic development of the child:

- Health and fitness – being active in an outdoor, natural environment
- Increased emotional wellbeing – just being among trees has been shown to have a real and positive effect
- Social development – communicating, sharing, negotiating and problem-solving and increased confidence
- Skills development – developing fine and gross motor skills and coordination for real purposes
- Gaining knowledge and understanding – multi-sensory, real life learning, learning to care for our green spaces and wildlife
- Individualised learning – careful observation allows adults to tailor support to children's own interests and stage of development
- Curriculum links – Forest School supports many areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum, National Curriculum and the 'Every Child Matters' agenda

When will Forest School be taking place and how should the children be dressed?

Children should come to school already dressed appropriately for Forest School with wellies, a waterproof coat, and waterproof trousers if the weather is wet (ALL NAMED). We would like them to wear an old long sleeved top and long sleeved trousers (to protect arm and legs, but no denim), as they will surely get mucky! As the weather gets warmer they may need a sunhat/sunscreen already applied by you. Please ensure children still bring in their school shoes in a bag to change into from muddy wellies!

How can I help?

- Make sure your child has the right clothing for the weather
- Please let us know if you would like to help out for any or all of these sessions. We would really value your support.
- Ask your children questions and feed back to us if you would like to.