

Forest School at Lutley

Background



Forest School is an inspirational process, where ALL learners are made to feel equal, unique and valued. They are offered regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. The pace and atmosphere are relaxed; children have freedom to explore and discover, initiate and drive their own learning, often needing to recognise and take appropriate risks, work together, solve problems and build resilience. In addition, they have lots of time to develop a strong, positive relationship with the natural world and to learn new skills.

Lutley is a Green Flag Eco-School, so has for many years had a strong environmental focus. The inclusion of Forest School in our EYFS and Key Stage 1 curriculum since 2012 has given us a whole new way to help children learn and develop, complementing class-based topics as well as reflecting all our school values. The year-round programmes are delivered by two trained members of staff and our Forest School site is well-managed and risk-assessed but also wonderfully special with lots of wildlife. Children love their afternoons at Forest School. Together, we have witnessed magical moments, shared discoveries, grown in confidence and found new abilities.

The sessions

Lutley pupils receive three programmes of Forest School, EYFS commence their first programme next term.

During sessions, we always address safety first, assessing risks and coming up with safety rules together. The Forest School Leaders then usually deliver a learning activity which could involve discovering more about the natural world or using natural materials to make things. After this, we have 'Explore Time' where the children are free to play, role play, climb, roll, hunt for minibeasts and create things. Towards the end of the session, we tidy up, wash our hands and have a drink together while we reflect on our afternoon and plan our next session.

This summer, we may serve elderflower cordial as part of a sensory themed session. In year 1 and 2 we have hot chocolate around a campfire and sometimes toast marshmallows, cook popcorn and possibly other foods. **Therefore, it is imperative that we know of any allergies or food preferences. Vegan marshmallows are available.**

Clothing

We go outside for Forest School in all weathers except high winds or electric storms. Therefore, it is massively important that the children are dressed appropriately. In the summer, **we do not allow shorts or short sleeved t-shirts** (to minimise the risk of scratches and nettle stings) and recommend a raincoat, sunhat and comfortable shoes. In the autumn and spring terms, children will also need extra layers, a warm coat, hat and gloves, and wellington boots (You may wish to keep an old coat for Forest School sessions, as they can get muddy and if you wish to send named waterproof trousers you may do so.)

Safeguarding

We have 3 members of staff and 2 or more parent helpers at each session to provide adequate supervision as the children play and travel to and from the site beside the school drive. We perform headcounts regularly throughout the afternoon and take the class medical box with us. There is also a first aid kit on site and both Forest School Leaders have First Aid training. In case of emergencies, we teach the children to regroup quickly when the whistle is blown. Only staff accompany the children to the toilets and all staff and parent volunteers have DBS certification.

Before the use of hand tools or lighting of campfires, lots of instruction and practice takes place. We have a designated tool area where pupils work one to one with a Forest School leader. For example, they may use a bowsaw to cut a section of a branch called a 'tree cookie' as a memento of their achievements.

We are looking forward to meeting the children and enjoying some outdoor learning together over the next two years.

We are constantly looking for volunteers to support these sessions, so if you can spare some afternoons (Mondays or Wednesdays this autumn) to support us and can get your DBS certificate, we would welcome you most warmly – the rewards are truly wonderful!

If you need to know anything more, please send us a message via the door or office.

Liz Cole and Sarah Sumner
Forest School Leaders