

What is forest school?

"Forest School is a child-centred inspirational learning process that offers opportunities for holistic growth through regular sessions. It is a long-term program that supports play, exploration and supported risk taking. It develops confidence and self-esteem through learner inspired, hands-on experiences in a natural setting."

- The Forest School Association, 2023

Watch this 5-minute video for a quick summary of what forest school is <https://youtu.be/5qCNOJHeR-Y>

Greenwood Growth CIC are aligned to the Forest School Association (FSA) through Practitioner membership to the FSA. Our delivery is underpinned by six key principles that shape and govern the Forest School ethos. There are many forms of outdoor education, and all have enormous value, however, Forest School is unique in its pedagogy. The six principles are:

1. Forest School is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation, and review links each session.
2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a lifelong relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
4. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
5. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
6. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners, who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

Greenwood Growth CIC provides meaningful learning by creating a golden thread of knowledge, skills and experience for individuals and groups through everything we do, centred on the learner/s. This ensures progression is relevant to context and appropriate to the individual/group. Our sessions are dynamic - it may be that a Y1 learner is as experienced using certain tools as a Y4 (and vice versa) and such realities will be accommodated and scaffolded creating a love of learning.

We role model Leave no Trace principles in order that as children grow and become ready for independence outdoors, they explore sustainably. It is through Forest Schools that learner's develop a true love for, and respect of their natural world.

How does Horton St. Michael's use Forest School?

Horton St. Michael's uses forest school to support the wellbeing of its pupils. By providing time outside engaged in meaningful activities we are encouraging learners to develop socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually (SPICES).

In forest school learners can expect to develop new skills and take supported risks in a safe, non-judgemental, and nurturing environment. Our Practitioners will support the exploration and solving of real problems, encourage use of tools, fire, ropes and even a spot of campfire cooking all the time building on personally felt experiences of being in the natural world. Opportunities for nature connection provide a good dose of the 'Green Prescription' developing healthy, resilient, creative, and independent learners who can relate to, and care for their natural world.

How do we know Forest School is having an impact?

We measure the impact of our Forest School Provision by gathering 'stories from the forest' which help us unlock potential within individuals involved in Forest School using the environment available to us to do so. In gathering information, we seek input from:

- Individual learners
- Support staff
- Volunteers
- Teachers and Teaching Assistants
- Other stakeholders, e.g. mental health leads, playground supervisors, school leadership teams

Our simple tool for gathering stories from the forest is based on the Leuvan Scale which measures wellbeing and links to typical observable outcomes that link to Values and contextual realities we are working within.

We keep in mind progress that individuals and groups are making in respect of typical Forest School activities, this is described below but is not necessarily applicable to every individual at the same pace - we know that some children will be more or less capable than others and Practitioners will differentiate placing the learner/s at the centre of their experience.

Planning and Reflection

Practitioners are responsible for their planning for Forest School delivery - they know their groups, the environment and context of the setting they are working with better than most. Planning is underpinned by:

- Forest School Principles (FSA).
- SPICES - a commonly seen framework for planning holistically with SPICES standing for Social, Physical, Intellectual, Character, Emotional and Spiritual development.
- School Values.

Where it enhances the learner experience planning may consider the in-school narrative at that time - this could be a relevant topic link, work around core values or a celebration day. We will always place the learners' needs front and centre, so if this means plans need to flex and change so be it.

Planning also takes place on the basis that the best Forest School provision is possible with a high adult:learner ratio, typically 1:8 depending on age and ability. *Where this ratio is not supported equal access to experiences will be compromised, and in some cases not possible.*

Practitioners are supported in their reflection through supervision and/or peer review as and when required helping to continually build on the learners' and groups' experiences.

Knowledge, skills and key vocabulary

Note: key vocabulary is that most likely used but is not prescriptive, nor exhaustive. There is a wealth of beautiful language used when we are in the natural world with children.

Curriculum strand	EYFS	Year One and Two	Year Three and Four	Year Five and Six
Fire Key vocabulary: flint and steel tinder kindling water fire blanket fire square tamping char cloth fire pit	Knowledge and skills Introduction to fire. Introduction to fire circle and Respect position. Safe behaviour near the fire. Gathering dry material for fire.	Knowledge and skills Importance of fire safety, necessity of water and never leaving a fire unattended. Using a flint and steel to make a spark. Children to be introduced to how to build a fire, including different lays and preparation such as sorting wood sizes. Gathering natural materials for fire. Adding fuel to the fire.	Knowledge and skills Fire triangle introduced - 3 things needed for a fire (oxygen, heat, fuel) Gathering and sorting tinder and kindling. Creating a fire lay e.g. Teepee Log Cabin Upside down Star. Help FS leader to build and start campfire at base camp Putting a fire out.	Knowledge and skills Lighting and managing a five-minute fire under supervision. Gathering tinder, kindling and fuel. Link to heating water / food / cooking / fire for craft / making char cloth Exploring primitive fire techniques and their pros and cons Putting a fire out and clearing the fire area.
Tools Key vocabulary: bowsaw	Knowledge and skills: Introduction to tools and	Knowledge and skills: Introduction to using	Knowledge and skills: Children to begin to use	Knowledge and skills: Children to begin to use

<p>secateurs sheath knife awl hand drill sawhorse anvil loppers bypass loppers whetstone drill bit and brace pruning saw axe mallet hammer nails billhook froe</p>	<p>their uses, e.g. bowsaw for cutting wood.</p> <p>Children encouraged use, hammers, bow saws, loppers and hand drills with tool talk and supervision.</p>	<p>tools in the forest environment – introducing woodland care</p> <p>Introducing new tools. Children to use all tools under 1:1 supervision</p> <p>Produce two step projects – e.g. cutting a stick to size using a Saw then taking a portion of bark off with a Sheath knife to create a ‘forest guardian’</p>	<p>previous tools with some independence (with some exceptions, e.g. bushcraft knife).</p> <p>Introduction to care and maintenance of tools, e.g. safely cleaning and sharpening tools with support.</p>	<p>all tools (with exception of bushcraft knife) independently.</p> <p>Children able to explain which tools are used for a particular job, correct carrying procedures and how to handle tools safely.</p> <p>Independently able to identify a range of tools and their uses (minimum of 6) as well as select the correct tool for the task required.</p> <p>Able to clean and sharpen their tools (with supervision).</p>
<p>Knots and Rope work</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: Rope traverse Basha/shelter/tarp, Hammock Clove hitch Bow line Taught line hitch Round turn with two half</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Introduction to uses of rope and knots; children to use rope swings, rope traverses, which are made whilst they watch (assist). Shown how to tie simple</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Children to be given tools to be able to make their own rope swings/shelters appropriate knots to be shown in practice and checked.</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Continue to learn new knots and their uses in the environment. Able to independently demonstrate a range of knots (approximately 3)</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Lashings and their uses Square lashing and shear lashings and how to use them in the environment Understand concepts such as breaking strength and</p>

<p>hitches Timber hitch Square lashing Frap Shear lashing Working end Bight Loop Splice Cordage 2-ply technique Finger rolling.</p>	<p>knots in practice – timber hitches when putting up a hammock, Larksfoot when putting up shelters.</p>	<p>Able to demonstrate 2 knots independently. Natural cordage making techniques introduced.</p>	<p>and describe their potential uses. Able to prepare natural fibre for cordage making, introduce 2-ply twist technique.</p>	<p>care of ropes. Independently demonstrate a range of knots (minimum of 4) including Independently able to demonstrate 2-ply twist technique to produce natural cordage</p>
<p>Flora and Fauna Key Vocabulary: This is environment specific for flora and fauna and will be adapted according to place), examples include: Canopy - Evergreen / deciduous trees - Oak, Fir, Hazel, Larch etc. Shrub layer - Elder, Hawthorn, Holly, Raspberry etc.</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Introduction to different flora and fauna found in the forest school environment. Explore and recognise available signs – tracks, songs, droppings.</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Explore habitats available on site Introduction to the different uses of the flora and fauna found in the forest school environment</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Independently able to identify habitats and likely flora or fauna to expect there – e.g- pond - pond skater Practical uses of flora and fauna in the environment e.g. in cooking, craft, bushcraft</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Ability to identify flora and fauna in environment and explain possible uses or impacts, e.g. taking too much</p>

<p>Ground layer - stinging nettle, Bramble, Cleavers, moss / lichen, dandelion etc.</p> <p>Birds - Blackbird, buzzard, Bluetit, Robin etc.</p> <p>Mammals - deer, badger, fox, woodmouse, vole, grey squirrel etc.</p> <p>Amphibians - frog, toad, newt etc.</p>				
<p>Cooking over fire</p> <p>Key Vocabulary: Kettle Billy can Dutch oven Tripod Trivet Grill Kelly / Ghilly / Storm kettle Simmer Boil Bake Cooked Toast</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Introduction to cooking over fire. Safety considerations.</p> <p>Observing making warm drinks.</p> <p>Toasting / warming something to eat.</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Prepare simple recipes with help.</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Explore various cooking techniques with assistance/supervision eg boiling, baking, frying.</p>	<p>Knowledge and skills: Explore alternative ways to cook food outdoors e.g. Earth oven, ash cooking, dutch oven, kelly kettle.</p> <p>Explore simple natural forages e.g. dandelions, elder flowers</p> <p>Safety considerations related to foraging.</p> <p>Sustainability</p>

Temperature Ashes Embers				considerations related to foraging.
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