

The Forest School Ethos

Forest School is a unique learning approach that places the child at the centre of its planning, preparation and delivery. The aim being to promote confidence, self esteem and social skills through practical tasks in a woodland environment. Children work outdoors regardless of the weather, they are provided with motivating and achievable tasks with the opportunity to use tools while learning and playing. It offers the opportunity to take supported risks, builds resilience and allows them to grow in confidence, self esteem and motivation whilst developing an understanding and appreciation of the natural world. We hope that children will be engaged in the activities that are presented, but there will be no expectation that they should be compelled to be involved and their own interests and ideas will be used to develop future sessions. We promote a holistic development of every child.

Forest School Principles:

1. Forest School is a long-term process
2. Forest School takes place in a natural wooded environment
3. Forest School aims to promote holistic development
4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks
5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School practitioners
6. Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes

The Forest School movement originated in Denmark. It has been an integral part of our own Early Years provision since the 1980s. It is based on the idea that young children can develop enthusiasm for learning through the appreciation of nature. In Denmark, it was found to boost pupil's confidence and improved behaviour and social skills. Children learn through play and exploration and about their environment, how to handle risks, use their initiative to solve problems and to co-operate with others. This approach has also helped to raise academic standards.



What happens in Forest School

In Bawdsey Primary School Forest School will take place in the small woodland at the back of the school playing field as well as Bawdsey Church yard. Both sites have been approved by the owners and provide both deciduous and coniferous woodland to explore.

We will be working with a class at a time for half a term (6 week block) on a rotation so that each class has two blocks, a total of 12 weeks Forest School each year. The sessions will aim to build practical skills and ability while promoting confidence and self-esteem.

Our sessions will be run by Mrs. Helen Rankin, a Level 3 qualified Forest School practitioner, with the support of other members of staff, who will be fully briefed and understand the Forest School ethos. As the sessions progress, children will be encouraged to share their ideas and hopes for futures sessions, ensuring that our pupils begin to initiate and direct their own learning.

Forest School uses natural resources to stimulate imagination, creativity and investigation. Forest School encourages children to:

- build personal and social skills
- problem solve
- use tools safely to make woodland craft
- follow their own interests
- build confidence in decision making and risk taking
- develop practical skills
- understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
- explore connections between nature and humanity
- reflect on learning and experiences
- develop their language and communication skills
- improve their fine motor skills
- improve their concentration skills
- improve social skills
- explore the world through all the senses available to them

The Benefits of Forest School

Forest School is suitable for all ages and abilities. In an ever changing World where children can feel low worth and self-esteem, we at Bawdsey feel the benefits of Forest School are huge. There are no right or wrong answers in Forest School and the children are encouraged to follow their own interests and develop their own learning which has positive affects on confidence and self-worth.

We try to promote a positive attitude to learning and a joy at being outdoors, while inspiring awe and wonder of their surroundings. We encourage problem solving as children experience hands-on, real life learning and develop their own practical skills. We plan to step away from a reliance on screen time, which we believe will help reduce anxiety and depression and reduce stress. Finally, we want children to build resilience and develop their own creativity.

Other benefits of Forest School include:

- Developing physical abilities and helping participants to stay active and healthy.
- Heightening self-awareness and improving emotional and social skills.
- Promoting a community of learning.
- Wellbeing - Encouraging participants to take care of themselves and others.
- Fostering care, appreciation and respect for wildlife and wild places.
- Broadening knowledge and understanding of the natural world.

(Suffolk Wildlife Trust)

