

# A Parent's Guide to Forest School

**Forest School** is an innovative educational approach to outdoor play and learning. The philosophy of Forest School is to encourage and inspire children of any age through positive outdoor experiences. Forest School is a way of learning which offers all children regular opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.

The original concept of Forest School began in Sweden in the 1950s and developed throughout Scandinavian and European countries. The modern concept of Forest School for pre-school children was established in Denmark in the 1980s as a solution to the lack of indoor facilities. In 1993 a group of nursery practitioners and lecturers from Bridgewater College in Somerset visited settings in Sweden and saw first hand the benefits of this style of learning on the children's well-being and development. They brought these ideas back to the UK and developed a Forest School programme, with training and accreditations for other practitioners.



Extensive research has shown that children attending Forest School sessions have:

- stronger social skills
- a greater ability to work in groups and as part of a team
- higher self-esteem and confidence
- greater independence
- improved self-awareness
- stronger communication skills
- better concentration and co-ordination
- improved mental health
- an ability to assess risk

## What will my child do in a Forest School session?

Children will be encouraged to discover, explore, observe and question what they find in their outdoor environment by:

- making dens
- exploring tracks
- using simple hand tools to make wooden objects
- cooking on fires
- creating art
- playing and climbing
- finding and identifying wildlife
- planting fruit, vegetables, flowers and plants
- creating and following maps
- enjoying stories and songs...

...in all weather and in all seasons.

## How does Forest School link to the Early Years Foundation Stage?

- "Being outdoors has a positive impact on a child's sense of well-being and helps all aspects of a child's development"
- "Being outdoors offers opportunities for doing things in different ways than when indoors"
- "Outdoor environments offer children freedom to explore, use their senses and be physically active and exuberant"
- "When children are actively involved in learning they gain a sense of satisfaction from their explorations and investigations"

Forest School leaders at Nursery have an accredited Level 3 Award in Forest School Leadership so they are fully trained in undertaking these sessions with the children.

## What does my child need for Forest School sessions?

To get the most from Forest School Sessions, your child will need:



- Wellington boots
- Long-sleeved fleece/warm top
- Warm/waterproof trousers and jacket or a waterproof 'all-in-one' suit
- Hat and gloves in Winter and a sun hat in Summer.