

St Peter's Forest School Information Leaflet for Parents

Welcome to our Forest school! This is where the journey begins.....we begin by walking past our school reading village and pushing open the wooden gate into our very own little patch of grass and woodland – our forest school!

We walk quietly, we think about using our eyes and ears more than our mouth. If we are quiet, we can begin to hear the nature around us, is it a bird, mouse or something else? At Forest School, our imaginations are free to explore. The wind whistles by and the adventure in the Forest begins.

Our Forest School is the place where magic can start to happen as imaginations, self-confidence and vocabulary start to grow.

Every visit to the Forest will be to the same place, yet the story will always change and be different. The amazing memories and adventures that take place in Forest School will always be enjoyed.

In Forest school all children in our school from Mars class up to Jupiter class are given the opportunity to access, experience and enjoy learning while working in the outside environment.

Forest school encourages children's imaginations, build's self-esteem and creates the desire to understand, learn and respect the natural world around them.

Our Forest school is on our school site and therefore the children are in a safe environment where they can succeed, create and use classroom skills and learning without them even realising it!

Through exploration and discovery, the children can enjoy and self-initiate their own learning.

Children can be nervous to push themselves out of their comfort zones and for some children spending time outside in the natural environment is an unusual experience.

In Forest School children can take calculated risks in a controlled environment and learn about the natural world whilst learning about their own boundaries and abilities.

They learn cause and effect and what may or could happen. They are given the opportunity and responsibility in small groups with high adult to pupil ratio and under supervision from qualified forest school leaders, to use tools and help be part of a team, creating a fire to keep them warm and cook food.

Equality, achievement and self-belief help children to return to the classroom feeling that they can accomplish and succeed in what they do. Every child is valued, and their input is vital; we work as a team, and they can respect and treat each other fairly and as equals.

My Child is doing Forest school...what is this?

Forest School is a method of working outdoors with children, young people and adults, using the natural environment to promote social and emotional development. It is an inspirational process that offers all learners regular opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. These learning experiences also help to develop communication and practical skills, as well as a greater understanding of the environment.

The **Six Key Guiding Principle of Forest School** (as set out by the Forest Schools Association):

Forest School....

1. is a long-term process of **frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural environment**, rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.
2. takes place **in a woodland or natural wooded environment** to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. aims to **promote the holistic development of all those involved**, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
4. offers learners the **opportunity to take supported risks** appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
5. is **run by qualified Forest School practitioners** who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.
6. uses a **range of learner-centred processes** to create a community for development and learning.

For more information see the Forest School Association website at

www.forestschoollassociation.co.uk

How can Forest School help my child's learning and development?

It is proven from research that learning that takes place in the outdoors is much more powerful and memorable as all the senses are involved. Forest Schools helps children develop through a child-led approach and teaches them how to assess risks for themselves.

How does Forest School fit into the curriculum at St Peter's Primary School?

At St Peter's Forest School is part of our timetabled PE curriculum. Forest school gives pupils the idea to explore the outside, challenge themselves, problem solve and take calculated risks. Forrest School also enables pupils to work in teams, learn how to instruct others and how to negotiate and work in agreement with peers.

When will my child have Forest School and how long do they do this for?

Forest school takes place in groups of 15 children. The following table shows how Forest School fits into our year group curriculums.

Children will experience a block of Forest school lessons which will last 6 weeks. They will have four of these 6-week blocks during their time at St Peter's and each block will be in a different season. The Forest school 6-week clocks run in Mars, Earth, Mercury and Jupiter classes. To ensure children have a Forest school experience every year, Pluto, Neptune and Saturn classes have a Forest school Experience Day where they will have the opportunity to recall and refine the skills, they learnt the previous year. Out curriculum is based on a Spiral model of repetition and recall ensuring Knowledge is deeply embedded in long term memory. The experience days ensures Forest school knowledge and skills are embedded and stored in long term memory.

Long Term Plan For FS	Autumn Term	Spring Term	Summer Term
Mars			Morning 2 hr
Pluto		Forest school experience day x1	
Earth			Afternoon 2 hr
Neptune	Forest school experience day x1		
Mercury		Wednesday pm 2hr	
Saturn			Forest school experience day x1
Jupiter	Afternoon 2 hr		

What is it like for my child on the Forest school afternoon?

The children arrive at school in the morning in their Forest School clothing and once the class teacher has checked that all the children are wearing the correct attire (see list or forest school equipment needed), the class walks down to the Forest School area. Each session begins around the Fire Circle, where we talk through the safety rules for working outdoors and about respecting each other. For every session there will be a small number of suggested challenges which might include woodwork, working with nature or crafting. The children can choose to move around a variety of activities throughout the afternoon or to freely access the site and explore their own areas of interest. At the start of the session the children will think about what they want to achieve and will PLAN their afternoon, they will then work collaboratively or independently to DO and action their plan finally we come together at the end of the session to REVIEW and REFLECT on the session. At this point children talk about what went well, what they plan to do next time or improve and what they learnt. During this time, the group will orally be offered a hot chocolate to drink. We end our afternoon by putting out our fire and being thankful for our time in nature. Each child thinks of something they are thankful for and then pour a cup of water over the dying embers

of the fire. We talk about returning the site to how we found it and ensuring we have minimal impact on our natural environment.

What structured Activities will my child do at Forest school?

At Forest School there are some planned activities which your child may choose to take part in however, it is important to understand that Forest school is child led and the leaders will help facilitate and support the interest that your child has. For example, one group may be fascinated by insects and spend the six weeks bug hunting, categorising bugs and making a bug hotel whilst another group may be excited by den building, create dens for animals, large scale dens and learn to tie knot sin rope to develop their shelter building skills. There are often links to other curriculum subjects although we do not explicitly plan to make links. Forest school is part of our PE curriculum although it supports other areas of the curriculum including personal development.

Example activities may include:

Learning songs and singing as a group

Building dens and bridges

Whittling wood

Making wooden disks

Story telling around the fire.

Problem Solving

3D pictures or sculptures out of clay or mud,

Making our own charcoal

Do you use tools at Forest school? Is this safe?

In Forest School the children use the same tools that they use in school as part of the Design Technology curriculum. These include potato peelers and palm drills. The older year groups, when they are competent, will also use small knives, bow saws and small axes. The Forest School leader will be the supervising adult when tools are being used and the ratio will be no more than 1:6. The Forest School leader will give the children a safety talk each session and when appropriate will explain how a tool should be used and when it can be used safely. If a child is not using a tool in a safe manner the activity is stopped and safety instructions will again be given. The Peeler is used as a first learning step toward learning to whittle. We only use soft green wood for whittling such as Holly and this can then be used to make charcoal. Palm Drills allow children to drill through a thin disc of wood and create a hole to thread string or a piece of dowel

through. Knives and small axes may be used in older year groups to teach children to safely split wood for the fire.

All children will be required to wear gloves on the supporting hand when they are using tools. Parents should provide gloves for their children. Gloves can protect the hand if worn on the bracing (supporting) hand but when working the child needs to feel the object and have a good grip at all times. All activities using tools are fully risk assessed.

How will my child be supervised at Forest School?

Our Forest school runs with 15 children at a time and two Forest school trained leaders and an additional adult helper. As a minimum we operate a ratio is 1:8. However during an activity where children will be using a tool, the ratio will be a minimum of 1:6 with the Forest School Leader working with this group.

Parents who would like to support at Forest school should speak to Mrs Page in the office. You will need to be able to commit to the block of 6 weeks and the school will arrange for you to have a DBS check.

What about first aid?

Both our Forest school leaders, Mrs Langton and Mrs Page, have been trained with the following qualifications:

- Forest School First Aid
- Emergency First Aid at Work + Emergency Paediatric First Aid

The First Aid kit is kept on the site as well as a First Aid Burns kit, Fire Blanket, walkie talkie, mobile phone and Water to extinguish fire.

If there is an accident which requires first aid, then the child will be initially treated on site. As in school usually, if the injury is serious and the child need to go home for further medical treatment, the leaders will contact the school office using the walkie talkie and alert the school to call the parents and the child will be brought back to the office. Asthma pumps are taken down to the forest area in the first aid bag. Parents should notify the Forest school leaders of any allergies which might require further treatment. All Epi Pens are taken down to the Forest school area.

9. If it's cold or raining will Forest School still take place?

Forest School takes place in all weathers. Children will participate as long as they are appropriately dressed. The only times we would cancel Forest School is in the case of high winds or a thunderstorm, where the leaders consider it is too unsafe to be in a woodland environment. If the weather is very extreme, either wet or cold it maybe that the session will be shortened or will take place inside if possible.

10. What if the children are cold or wet?

Children should be appropriately dressed so that the weather conditions do not affect their well-being. At the start of the session, children are reminded of the importance of telling an adult if they are cold or wet. There is always an additional adult present at the sessions who is tasked with monitoring well-being including if the children are too cold or wet. If this is the case children will be taken back into school to change. During Forest school there usually, a fire lit so children have the choice to come and sit round the fire circle and warm up. When it is raining there is usually a shelter erected so that children can choose to be in this area.

11. What about during hot weather?

Our site is exposed to the sun in places although there are trees and areas of shelter. Children will be asked to be wearing hats and bring in sunscreen which they will apply before the start of the session. Children may be given an ice lolly during the session to help keep them cool. In the summer it is unlikely we will offer hot chocolate during the session.

12. I am struggling to find the correct equipment needed for Forest school, can the school help please?

We will always make sure all children are wearing the correct clothing before we go outside. No child will be allowed to go outside if their clothes are not suitable for the conditions. If you know that you are struggling to find or buy the correct equipment, then please contact the office so we can discuss how the school can support you.