

## **Forest School**

At Portway Junior Primary School, we embrace the Forest School approach as a unique method of outdoor learning. Our core values of positivity, resilience, integrity, dedication, and encouragement underpin our commitment to inspire and uplift children through enriching outdoor experiences.

Our primary objective is to facilitate children's growth by fostering a profound connection with nature, enabling them to navigate risks, and, most crucially, encouraging them to harness their own initiative in problem-solving and collaboration with peers. This journey includes the responsible use of tools, the cultivation of behavioural boundaries—both physical and social—and the gradual development of self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-motivation.

Our approach aims to instil the Forest School ethos in every child. Forest School aligns seamlessly with a child's inherent motivation and their positive approach to learning, empowering them to embrace risk-taking, make informed choices, and initiate their learning journeys independently.

Our Forest School curriculum revolves around hands-on exploration and experiential learning, with children venturing out in all weather conditions throughout the year, deriving insights from the ever-changing seasons and natural surroundings. We prioritise safety by ensuring appropriate clothing, and when high winds pose risks, we refrain from entering the woods. We harness the children's interests in conjunction with the diverse natural resources in our woodland to stimulate creative thinking, foster problem-solving skills, and facilitate skill development.

An essential component of Forest School is the promotion of environmental awareness and sustainability. Children are educated about the importance of respecting and caring for the world around them. We encourage both children and adults to cherish their environment and cultivate an awareness of conservation issues related to the wild areas in our vicinity. Our commitment extends to the use of reclaimed, recycled, and sustainable resources to sustain and develop our Forest School site.

Fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment is integral to our Forest School philosophy. To nurture this ethos, we ensure that our site remains tidy, refrain from causing harm to growing flora, and only collect items from the ground. We strive to preserve the site's integrity by preventing overuse through continuous monitoring by the Forest School Leader.

At Forest School, inclusivity is at the core of our philosophy. We actively promote the inclusion of all children and adults in our sessions, irrespective of race, gender, ability, religion, sexual orientation, or age. We aspire to:

- Provide a secure environment where all children can thrive, and their contributions are valued.
- Embrace and acknowledge the contributions of all children and adults to our understanding of equality and diversity.
- Integrate inclusion seamlessly into all Forest School activities.

The success of Forest School manifests in several ways:

**Confidence and Independence:** Children grow in confidence as they experience freedom, time, and space in their learning, allowing them to progress at their own pace and display independence.

**Social Skills:** Activities such as sharing tools and group play nurture teamwork, fortify bonds, and enhance social skills among children.

**Language Development:** Sensory experiences in Forest School promote language development, thereby improving communication skills and boosting self-esteem.

**Engagement and Concentration:** The stimulating woodland environment fascinates children, encouraging sustained attention and concentration over extended periods.

**Physical Benefits:** Increased outdoor activity enhances physical stamina, as well as gross and fine motor skills.

**Environmental Stewardship:** Children develop a deep interest in the natural world and gain respect for the environment, fostering a lifelong commitment to environmental protection.

### Teaching and Learning

Forest School places no constraints on prescribed activities, allowing for the flexibility to undertake a wide range of outdoor learning experiences. The essence of Forest School lies in how these activities are delivered. Within this framework:

**Choice and Independence:** Children have the autonomy to select activities.

**Observation and Planning:** The Forest School Leader carefully observes children to plan the next steps in their learning journey.

**Tailored Learning:** Relevant skills, knowledge, and resources are introduced based on the children's interests and developmental needs.

**Achievable Tasks:** Tasks are designed to be open-ended, with no right or wrong way to approach them, except when adhering to health and safety procedures.

Activities encompass a broad spectrum, including field studies, sensory experiences, bushcraft, woodland crafts, team-building exercises, wildlife conservation efforts, imaginative activities, physical play, and construction projects. The selection of activities is tailored to the age, developmental stage, and interests of the learners.