

## Forest School

The Forest School programme combines practical skills and activities with techniques to encourage creativity, independence, raise self-confidence and self-esteem, promote social skills, emotional development and long term physical development. Its cross-curricular approach fits with the Fort Federation's ethos and aims of providing a rich and broad curriculum that builds confidence and produces creative thinkers and problem-solvers who work on their skills as a journey together. Outdoor learning has an enormously positive impact on children's development.

Originally a Scandinavian concept, Forest Schools have been proven to be an effective foundation that has raised academic achievements. The children develop a variety of life skills: altruism, independence, self-awareness and social communication skills, all of which assist individuals to grow in self-esteem and confidence. In studies, children have appeared to: be more balanced with greater social capability, have fewer days off sick; are able to concentrate and have better co-ordination with a greater ability to work in groups.

We are extremely lucky across the two schools to benefit from outdoor areas, including fields with trees and some woodland. The outdoor areas are used for many aspects of the curriculum including science religious studies and after school clubs.

The majority of our Forest School activities take place in these areas. This is a safe area to use as it is bordered on its sides by the school's boundary hedges and fences, with close access to the main school buildings.

Our activities will depend on the ability, age and experience of participants.

Examples of Forest School activities include:

- Woodland management and nature exploration
- Building dens and other structures
- Fires and cooking
- Games and invitations for imaginative play
- Natural crafts

- Using tools, such as knives and saws
- Scavenger hunts and adventure
- Seasonal celebrations

The children get the opportunity to identify and use local flora and fauna and will be encouraged to explore and use all their senses. Tools are used in Forest Schools in a traditional woodland manner and this use of tools in the wood promotes trust and self-confidence within those taking part and their use will develop both gross and fine motor skills. They have the opportunity to learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and most importantly to use their own initiative to solve problems and co-operate with others.