

Holy Cross RC Primary School



Forest School Policy

Signed _____ [Headteacher] Date September 2025

Signed _____ [Chair of Governors] Date September 2025

Next Review Date September 2028

Forest School Intent:

We aim to provide a rich and varied Forest School curriculum in a natural environment outside of the school building to aid children's increasing self-confidence in their ability to manage themselves and their bodies.

Holy Cross aims to use the natural outdoor woodland area on its grounds to offer the children an insight into the Forest School ethos. This approach to outdoor learning encourages children to become independent, use their imagination, take appropriate risks within boundaries and initiate learning for themselves. Forest School is a holistic approach to learning, incorporating children's individuality and develops their skills for lifelong learning. It can cover many areas of learning, including the emotional and spiritual aspects of learning where self-esteem and self-confidence can grow and positive relationships with peers can be formed. Forest School explores the outdoors and the natural environment with practical, useful activities all year round. It develops peer learning with the adults providing support and enabling activities to take place. The child's interest and intent will be at the heart of any activity.

All children are encouraged to take part and explore their environment. We encourage children to develop their creative and expressive abilities, through improvisation and problem-solving and through learning activities provided. Children are taught to appreciate the importance of the world around them and develop their environmental awareness.

Forest School Implantation:

Forest School is available to all children at Holy Cross RC Primary School. EYFS, Year 1 and Year 2 receive one session per week all year round, while Key Stage 2 classes receive alternating sessions every other week, for Terms 1, 3, 4 and 5.

Forest School Impact:

The impact of our Forest School curriculum is to enable all children regardless of age, ability and need to make progress in the following areas:

Physical development:

- To develop physical competence and confidence by acquiring and developing a range of fine and gross motor skills.
- To be aware of their bodies in an outdoor area, including in different weather conditions.
- To develop knowledge, skills and understanding, and the ability to remember, repeat and refine actions with increasing control and accuracy.
- To promote fitness and a healthy lifestyle by understanding the effects of exercise on the body and the importance of going outside and reconnecting with nature.

Social and emotional development:

- To develop a love of the outdoors.
- To develop the ability to work independently and communicate with and respond appropriately towards others using verbal and non-verbal communication.
- To develop confidence in their own skills and abilities.
- To promote an understanding of safe practice through explore-play and develop a sense of responsibility towards the world around them.
- To realise that the right outdoor activity for you can be fun and will give you energy for other things in life.

- To create and plan games and teach them to one another.
- To develop a sense of fair play.

Cognitive development:

- To develop decision making and problem-solving skills.
- To develop reasoning skills and the ability to make judgements.
- To develop an increasing ability to select, link and apply skills and compositional ideas.
- To improve observational skills, the ability to use objects in their environment to their own purpose and the ability to recognise how the environment responds to them.
- To be able to consider how their actions impact an outdoor environment.

Spiritual, moral and cultural development:

- To develop a positive attitude of themselves and their place in the natural world.
- To experience a range of differing activities and realise that physical activity doesn't have to be about winning a competition - doing your best, having fun and exploring is just as important.
- To raise self-esteem by providing opportunities for learning and play that children may not encounter through a traditional curriculum.
- To raise awareness of the importance of the world around them and to nurture a connection with nature and the environment.
- To develop a moral awareness of how to care for the environment.

The Forest School Curriculum:

Forest School clearly fits in with environmental, Science, Physical Education and outdoor education. But it is also about the whole child, their approach to learning and especially about their self-esteem. The Forest School experience and the ethos is all about the child leading in their learning, following their interests and engaging in their own curriculum. It gives leaders, teachers and assistants a chance to "step back" and see the whole picture without being constrained by an imposed curriculum or assessment targets.

Many of the outcomes can easily be mapped across to a curriculum, and Forest School sits well with the EYFS and National Curriculum. The approach of small achievable tasks and a focus on the process rather than the end product helps develop the child's personal, social and emotional development. Tasks can be based around creative arts and design, physical development or understanding the world. Questioning, commentary, sustained shared thinking and the use of active learning can incorporate aspects such as Mathematics, Literacy and communication and language. Forest School particularly encourages children to explore the characteristics of effective learning. The ethos of Forest School is that it is child-led, so if a child would rather be doing something else than a particular small, achievable task that is fine, we can facilitate what they would like to do and provide inspiration and support.

Forest School can also be linked into the classroom to support class-based activities. For example, children could be drawn into a miniature world story in Forest School and use their imagination to build a miniature town or city or factory, they could then write stories based on their miniature world. They could make story sticks in Forest School and then use them to support their work in the classroom. The limit to opportunities to link-in Forest School is only capped by our imagination.

Curriculum Differentiation

Activities and learning tasks in Forest School are to be designed so that any and all children attending the session can take part.

Diversity

All children will be included with all activities and no form of discrimination will take place, reasonable adjustments will be made to make it inclusive for all. Inclusion is a thread which runs through all of the Forest School activities regardless of a child's ability, disability, gender, race, culture, etc. Holy Cross RC Primary School has an Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Policy and an Equal Opportunities Policy which will be adhered to during Forest School sessions.

Staffing/Staff development

The Forest School Lead is responsible for planning, teaching and recording evidence from Forest School sessions. They will be supported by at least one (1) other member of staff during sessions, alongside any necessary additional staff such as LSA's working 1:1. All staff supporting during Forest School sessions must have read and understand all necessary Risk Assessments and take responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the children. The Forest School Lead (and any other staff that are interested) will pursue relevant CPD opportunities that will support their ability to run effective Forest School sessions and ensure secure subject knowledge. All staff take responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of the children when in the Forest.

Staff should be comfortable and competent in the area of activity being taught. Staff should indicate where they feel they need support so that appropriate support can be given by either the subject leader, specialist sports coaches or outside providers through INSET. All staff who attend CPD courses must provide feedback/disseminate the information.

Evidence

Forest School is available to all children at Holy Cross RC Primary School; EYFS, Year 1 and 2 receive one session every week all year round, while KS2 classes receive alternating sessions every other week, for Terms 1, 3, 4 and 5.

To evidence this and provide effective evidence of teachers' judgements on children's abilities, teachers will need to take photographs/ videos of children engaging in free play and taking part in any planned activity.



Teachers must file photos and videos under in the folder for each year group under 'Forest School' (dated to the appropriate academic year, e.g. 2022-23).

Health and Safety

Everyone has a duty under Health and Safety guidelines to ensure Forest School activities are carried out with due regard to the safety of staff and pupils in line with school, Local Authority and Health & Safety Policies. The effective management of safety for Holy Cross includes these components:

- Risk Assessment and planning before a lesson.
- Children to be briefed in Circle Time at the start of each session. This time will be used to remind children of 'best practice' in regard to the activities they may want to take part in e.g. keeping the walkway under the rope swing clear, only climbing as high as the top of the fence, etc.
- Organisation of routines before, during and between lessons to include:
 - Register of children going to the Forest must be taken in class. A physical copy of the register must be taken by the Forest Lead, in case of emergency.
 - Children attending Forest School sessions must wear appropriate footwear. Children must be wearing trainers or shoes (if dry) or wellies (if wet/ muddy). Footwear such as sandals or flip-flops are not safe for Forest School activities.
 - Children must also wear appropriate clothing. This is dependant on seasonal; children should wear warm clothes, including hats, gloves and coats, in winter and have access to either coats or waterproofs if raining.
 - All long hair should be tied back.
 - All equipment, apparatus and environment should be checked before the start of every lesson by teacher and is the responsibility of the teacher. All equipment should be taken up to the Forest by the Forest School Lead before the children are brought there and returned to the school at the end of the session. Children should be given health and safety guidance through the lesson.
 - Location of safety equipment. All teachers are required to always carry a walkie-talkie and a whistle with them to call for help should a situation arise such as first aid. All teachers should also carry a first aid pack, fully stocked, for each session. If using tools, such as saws, whittling knives or hammers, both staff and children should be wearing protective wear (goggles, gloves, aprons).
 - Reporting accidents. Should incidents occur they should be reported to the relevant people. If the accident involves faulty equipment the Forest Lead, Head Teacher and Healthy and Safety leader must be notified. If the accident is a first aid then the relevant form should be completed, a copy

- sent to the office and one home, once checked by a first aider. If a head injury has occurred or a mark is present, then parents are to be called.
- Should an incident occur the Teacher or adult in charge must blow their whistle, at which point the children will stop what they are doing and return to the circle, along with an accompanying adult. The Forest Lead should then deal with the situation. If there is a Lockdown necessary, the Forest Lead will blow their whistle eight (8) times. The children will stop what they are doing and return to the circle to sit silently on the ground until the all-clear is given. The children practice this termly.

Extra-curricular activities

Throughout the year, there is an additional Forest School session held in the forest by the Forest School lead after school. These sessions offer an opportunity for extra free-play time and small group activities planned by the Forest Lead.

Safeguarding

All adults working with children in school are to be checked for appropriate DBS clearance. All staff to be trained as per the Safeguarding policy. All staff responsible for safety and wellbeing of the children under their care.

Links with other subjects:

Forest School can link to other subjects, e.g. English, (recount/report/ instructions), Science (body parts/pulse rates) and Maths (shape/position/directions/counting and graphical representation of data). Computing is also recognised as a potential tool for recording movements and actions to develop children's ideas as well as the appropriate use of audio visual and data logging equipment.

Summary:

At Holy Cross we believe Forest School to be an integral part of the curriculum to be enjoyed by all children. It is a real opportunity for both teacher and child to consolidate and work on the values that underpin our school and its beliefs.