



St Nicholas^{CE}
First School

learning and believing, growing and achieving



Forest School Curriculum Overview St Nicholas First School

Amy MacKinnon - Muddy Mondays Outdoor Learning

How will I connect with the natural world and develop a love for the outside environment?

How will I develop my team work skills?

What skills will I use?

What characteristics of effective learning will I develop?

How can I make or build...?

What natural resources can I use to...?

Which knot can I use to...?

What are these trees and insects called?

How can I manage risks and keep myself safe?

What Is Forest School?

Forest School is an innovative educational approach to outdoor play and learning. It allows children to reconnect with nature, experience the freedom of the outdoors and develop in way not possible in the classroom.

Forest Schools is not a one off learning "day" or a stroll in the woods. It is a holistic, child centred learning experience integrated into the learning week. It's is most beneficial when incorporated regularly into the curriculum.

Children 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. Forest School programmes run throughout the year in all weathers - there is no bad weather, only the wrong clothing!

Forest School can help children (and adults) develop: self awareness, self regulation, intrinsic motivation, empathy, good social communication skills, risk awareness and management, independence, a sense of adventure, team work, an understanding of how they learn best, a positive mental attitude, self-esteem and confidence, and a love for the outdoors.

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Key Principles of Forest School at St Nicholas

1. Forest School is a long term process with frequent and regular sessions in a local natural space, not a one-off visit. Planning, adaption, observations and reviewing are integral elements.

At St Nicholas First School, Forest school sessions are linked with classroom topics to enrich the learning experience further. Sessions are planned following the observations and reflections of the previous session and building on learning in prior year groups.

2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.

At St Nicholas First school, the sessions are held in the Forest School area. All year groups incorporate elements of environmental awareness and enhancement, learning to love and care for the natural environment. Tree and plant identification is included in sessions and is built upon each year, progressing learning further.

3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners

At St Nicholas First School, where appropriate, sessions will aim to link to topics and themes in the classroom and build upon this prior knowledge and experiences. Our sessions aim to develop the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.

4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.

At St Nicholas First School, sessions are designed to build on an individual and class innate motivation, positive attitudes, needs and interests. Schemas and concepts are identified and built upon. Forest School sessions include the use of tools and fires where deemed appropriate to the learners. Extensive Risk Assessments, policies and procedures, held by Amy MacKinnon (Muddy Mondays Outdoor Learning) ensure risks are managed appropriately. Forest School sessions follow a Risk/Benefit process that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.

5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School Practitioners who continuously develop their professional practice.

At St Nicholas First School, Reception to Year 4 sessions are planned, led and managed by Amy MacKinnon (Muddy Mondays Outdoor Learning) She holds a Forest

School Level 3 qualification and also QTS with over 10 years experience as a Primary Teacher. She holds DBS, Safeguarding level 1, First Aid qualification which includes paediatric and outdoors elements. All staff regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people. Accompanying school staff hold an up to date first aid qualification which includes paediatric elements. Amy MacKinnon T/A Muddy Mondays Outdoor Learning holds relevant insurance and all the relevant policies and procedures to run sessions.

6. Forest School uses a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.

At St Nicholas First School, a child-centred pedagogical approach is employed that is responsive to the needs and interests of the learners. This includes schemas and concepts. Play and choice are an integral part of the learning process at Forest School and play is recognised as vital to learning and development. Forest School sessions incorporate all learning styles and needs. Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future. Observation is an important element of FS pedagogy. Observations are used to 'scaffold' and tailor learning and development at FS. Knowing when to stand back or when to intervene is very important.

What will children learn?/How has the curriculum been designed?

Reception

Children are at the immersion stage of Forest School. They spend time exploring the natural world, recognising common plant and trees in the Forest School area. They develop their physical skills and are beginning to identify some risks. They explore, collect, mix and construct, make dens, use clay, create natural art and experience fire and simple cooking. They begin to work in small teams and in pairs as the activities dictate. They become aware of their own safety and hold a regard for the safety of other too. Children see tools being used by the leader and begin to use simple tools safely.

Key Stage One

Children begin the skills stage. Building on learning in Reception, KS1 sessions incorporate class topics to give a greater depth of learning and subject vocabulary. Year 1 sessions incorporate 'castles' and Year 2 sessions incorporate 'explorations, islands and the sea'. Children are introduced to simple knot tying. They experience some tool use and begin to cook their own food. They build knowledge about how to build a fire and observe how it is lit. They develop their shelter building. Children have the opportunity to model and construct with clay and natural resources. They

develop their knowledge on risks and keeping themselves, their class and their natural world safe from harm.

Key Stage Two

Children progress further into the skills stage. Building on learning in KS1 sessions continue to incorporate class topics to give a greater depth of learning and subject vocabulary. Year 3 sessions incorporate 'The Vikings' and Year 4 'World war 2 and survival'. Children develop their knot tying skills further. They experience tool use, make and cook their own food and, in year 4, manage their own 'rationing' food budget for their group. They begin to use fire steels to make a spark and progress to making a shower of sparks. They build on their knowledge about how to build a fire, leading up to building and lighting a group fire in year 4. They develop their shelter building further using knowledge of waterproofing and heat retaining materials.

Children have the opportunity to develop their creativity and construction skills further developing their own inventions with clay and natural resources. They develop their knowledge on risks further and take more responsibility in keeping themselves, their class and their natural world safe from harm.

All years incorporate flora and fauna ID, planting in the school grounds and making bird food applicable to the time of year.

At St Nicholas First School, all sessions run by Amy MacKinnon begin with a provocation, stimulus or challenge however sessions are led by the children's ideas and creativity as far as the environment, setting, risk assessments and resources allow.