

# What is Forest School?

## What is Forest School's approach to learning?

Forest school is a process which offers children frequent, regular opportunities to develop confidence through hands-on experiences in a natural environment. We believe that the natural environment allows the children space to explore and discover for themselves. We work with the children to keep our ecological impact to a minimum and to achieve sustainability. To do this we foster a relationship between the children and nature. Furthermore we use natural resources to inspire and to encourage intrinsic motivation, independence, language and resilience within our learners. Some of the activities in Forest School are catalyzed or scaffolded by adults present but steps beyond the start will be child initiated allowing for unplanned and unexpected and unlimited learning to take place.

The Hanney Community Woodland is our central environment. It offers us the passage of time; the changing of the seasons, life cycles and a rich source of smells, sights, textures, sounds and tastes.

Risk assessments and risk benefit assessments are carried out annually, termly and 'sessionally' to ensure the safety of all participants.

*(Words inspired by Forest School Training)*

## What is Holistic Development?

Holistic learning is also known as global learning and is based on the principle that children learn best when they are engaged with an activity in their mind, body and soul. It makes sense therefore that the learning goals and approach are multi-dimensional. These learning goals can only be achieved when the child is physically healthy, emotionally secure and socially competent. The Early Learning Goals splits the characteristics of effective learners into three areas; Playing and Exploring, Active Learning and Creating and Thinking Critically. Within playing and learning the children explore what they themselves are interested in, they use what they already know in their play and they are willing to take risks and be persistent. Active learning is about being involved and concentrating, being persistent and being satisfied and proud of the outcome. Within creative learning the children have their own ideas and draw on their own experiences to learn new skills. The children must also learn to be resilient; to try new ways if something fails and not to give up. Forest School offers activities to cover all these characteristics of learning.



Circle time at Forest School

## Important Date:

First Forest School session

Volunteers needed.





## How is holistic development facilitated through Forest School?



*Holistic learning in practise.*

**“Don’t give up.  
I believe in you all.  
A person’s a person  
No matter how  
small.”**

**-Dr Seuss**

**Emotional well-being.** The woodland is naturally a multi-sensory environment offering a world of learning experiences. They learn to make their own decisions, take risks and solve problems. Children gain knowledge and so build confidence about their environment, they develop social skills by working together and they develop an understanding of boundaries allowing them to play safely, think positive and take risks. The child initiated approach allows the children to develop their own interests and explorations. Finally, the very fact that Forest School is outdoors and active allows the children to relax and feel a sense of well being.

**Language Development.** Learning about nature and story telling broadens the children’s vocabulary and develops their listening skills. They also develop conversational skills as they attempt to solve practical problems such as making journey sticks, building animal homes and making nature mobiles.

**Physical Development.** The children build co-ordination as they attempt to move logs, negotiate tricky terrain, carry objects and run around as only children do. They also develop fine motor skills by learning to tie knots, weave grasses and draw what they see. Through their movement around the multi-terrain of the woodland the children learn spatial awareness, co-ordination and balance through their play.

**Knowledge of the world.** Children have ample opportunity to identify and find out about living things. They ask questions about what they see, hear or smell developing the enquiring, observant mind. They begin to see changes as the seasons pass and begin to relate these to natural patterns.

**Time to Reflect.** At the end of each Forest School session is a time for reflection. This provides feedback and so helps next step planning, generates ideas and helps the children to think critically.

