



Forest Schools at Rushey Mead Primary School

Intent

At Rushey Mead we aim for most if not all of our children to access our Forest School provision over their primary life.

We recognise that a Forest School approach will

- increase self-esteem, self-confidence and a positive self-image
- improve social skills and form positive relationships with peers and adults through enabling children to learn to co-operate and work as part of a team.
- develop language and communication skills
- improve physical and motor skills
- improve motivation and concentration, promoting positive attitudes towards learning
- increase knowledge and understanding of the environment by providing opportunities that enable children to explore and experience the natural world through a range of physical activities
- enable children to learn how to take risks and develop strategies in order to do so within the boundaries of safety.

The children's interests are highly important at Forest School and, along with the varied natural resources in the woodland, are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development.

At Forest School, children run, make a noise, get their hands dirty and learn in a natural space by taking part in seasonal activities that may involve an element of managed risk; by succeeding here, they develop the self-esteem that will support them throughout their lives.

Implement

Teaching and Learning Forest School has no set of prescribed activities and responsive to the children interest and the time of year. Within the Forest School:

- Children have a choice in what activities they undertake.
- The Forest School Leader will observe the children carefully in order to plan for the next steps.
- The Forest School Leader will introduce relevant skills, knowledge and resources based on what the children are interested in and need to develop.
- The Forest School Leader set up what the children are to achieve by breaking tasks into small achievable chunks.
- Tasks are open – no right or wrong way of doing things (exceptions to this are health and safety procedures).

The types of outdoor activities children undertake within a Forest School may include:

- Field Studies Activities – minibeast hunts, tree identification, bird watching, life cycle games.
- Sensory Activities – games to do with colour, smell, sound, touch, blindfold games.
- Bushcraft – shelter building, knot use, fire lighting and cooking, cordage making, wild foods, whittling
- Woodland crafts – willow crafts, natural jewellery, weaving, natural dyes, traditional crafts
- Teambuilding and trust games – blindfold games, circle games, problem solving activities, team games
- Wildlife conservation – tree planting, nest box construction, coppicing, fence/path building
- Imaginative activities – story telling, drama, role play, songs
- Physical play – tree climbing, balancing, log dragging, digging
- Construction – shelter building, rope swings, tree houses, pulleys Organisation,

We aim to and are committed to:

- providing a secure environment in which children can flourish and in which all contributions are valued;
- including and value the contribution of all children and adults to our understanding of equality and diversity;
- make inclusion a thread which runs through all of the activities of Forest School

Impact

Our Forest School provision ensures that all children leave our school with the knowledge, skills and understanding about the natural world as well as with enhanced communication, empathy and confidence as a result of the activities they engage in. These soft skills translate through into the classroom and support the wider curriculum through oracy, paired and group work. Our Forest School approach also enhances our Science curriculum, through the additional knowledge the children gain about plants and animals, and our Design and Technology curriculum, where children can apply their skills with a range of materials and tools.

Forest Schools is another strand that enhances our whole school commitment to provide opportunities for children that generate enthusiasm, fun and enjoyment. Engaging in bush craft, wild art and conservation activities will, we hope, provide memorable learning experiences that the children can carry with them on their next adventures when they leave our school.