

# Forest School

## A Guide for Parents



“This is the best kind of classroom,  
It’s a journey through time and space,  
From the smallest seed to the largest tree,  
This is a Forest and a learning place.

This is the best kind of classroom,  
Where the seasons don’t happen in books.  
Where the learning is watching and thinking and talking  
And everyone notices, everyone looks.”

From ‘The best kind of classroom’ by Ian MacMillan

## **What is Forest School?**

Forest School has derived from the Scandinavian education system and is about children building self esteem and independence through exploring and experiencing the natural world. Forest school sessions run throughout the year by trained practitioners, within a natural environment. Forest school is a mixture of learning new skills e.g. knot tying and exploring whilst playing in the outdoors. The sessions are planned to meet the needs of individuals to ensure that children grow in self-confidence and understanding. The ethos of Forest school encourages practical, hands-on experiences. It also allows teachers to step back and observe the children in order to then encourage and inspire them to achieve and learn. It fosters a love and respect for the natural world.



## **Where will my child be going?**

Forest School at Livingstone Primary and Nursery School is held within the school grounds. There is a small woodland area to the rear of the playground accessed via a green gate. The site has been thoroughly risk assessed and all sessions are led by a trained Forest School leader.

## **What will my child be doing?**

Forest School will run all year round and in all weathers (unless weather conditions are dangerous). The child led ethos of Forest School means that once at the site the children can choose what to participate in, carefully supported and encouraged by trained adults. Forest School activities vary depending on the season.

They may include:

- Hunting for mini-beasts
- Natural crafts – crowns, dream catchers, collages, weaving, transient art
- Mud sculptures
- Identifying flora and fauna
- Leaf printing
- Shelter building
- Making fairy houses
- Knot tying
- Using tools – such as peeling bark from sticks with potato peelers to make toasting forks
- Fire building
- Cooking on a camp fire

Sessions are planned around the individual's and group's needs, and built upon each week. The earlier sessions will concentrate on safety, establishing boundaries and routines. As the children develop in confidence and familiarity with the environment the sessions focus on developing and reinforcing skills and understanding.

### **What benefits will my child get from participating in Forest Schools?**

Forest Schools supports the holistic development of the child:

- Health and fitness – being active in an outdoor, natural environment
- Increased emotional wellbeing – being confident and self-reliant
- Social development – communicating and negotiating with children and adults to solve problems and share experiences
- Skills development – developing fine and gross motor skills and coordination for real purposes
- Gaining knowledge and understanding – using all of our senses, problem solving and real-life learning
- Individualised learning – careful observation allows adults to tailor support to children's own interests and their stage of development
- Forest School supports many areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework and the National Curriculum.

## **Health and Safety**

The health and safety of all participants is central to everything done within a Forest School programme. Forest School leaders are fully trained in risk assessment and emergency outdoor first aid. The Forest School site is fully risk assessed as are all activities and tools used. Some activities are 'higher risk' such as campfire cooking and tool use, however these are only available to the children once certain behaviours and boundaries are established. Children are also encouraged and supported in recognising and managing risk for them selves.

**If you would like any further information about Forest School please speak to Mrs Davies.**