

## **Forest School at Hillesley**

### **Intent**

We are extremely fortunate to be surrounded by beautiful countryside in the village of Hillesley. At Hillesley Primary School our aim is to encourage and inspire children through positive outdoor experiences at our Forest School which is a five minute walk from school, set on a hillside.

Although Forest School isn't part of the National Curriculum, we see it as an important part of educating children to respect wildlife and our environment. Children will have the opportunity to learn about and enjoy the natural environment, how to handle risks and most importantly to use their own initiative to solve problems and co-operate with others. The children use full sized tools, play, learn boundaries of behaviour; both physical and social, establish and grow in confidence, self-esteem and become self-motivated.

We aim to give all children a collective insight into the ethos of Forest School. Forest School builds on a child's innate motivation and positive attitude to learning, offering them the opportunities to take risks, make choices and initiate learning for themselves. The Forest school learning environment provides opportunities for children to develop self-esteem, self-confidence, to form positive relationships with others, to develop a growing awareness of their emotional needs and the needs of others, to learn to cooperate and work with their peers and adults and to develop strategies in order to take risks within the boundaries of safety.

### **Implementation**

Forest School is about exploring and experiencing the natural world through practical activities. The children go out in all weathers, all year round, exploring and learning from the seasons and environment changes. Appropriate clothing will be worn and during high winds it will be considered unsafe to go into the woods. The children's interests along with the varied natural resources in our woodland are used to stimulate creative thinking, problem solving and skill development.

Our excellent, qualified Forest School leader, Mrs Hannah Druett, leads all our weekly sessions for KS1. KS2 children also visit Forest School when it is beneficial for their learning in other areas of the curriculum. One of the principles of Forest School is to promote environmental awareness and encourage sustainability. The children are taught about respect and responsibility for the world around them.

Lessons are planned in advance and will usually follow themed topics children are studying each term. Knowledge and skills are carefully planned to ensure progression as children move from EYFS to Year 6.

Children learn rules and boundaries for staying safe at Forest School. If appropriate, reclaimed, recycled and sustainable resources will be used to maintain and develop our forest school site. In order to encourage the children to look after the site we will always leave it tidy and never damage anything growing in it. We will only collect things that are on the ground and leave the area as we found it when we leave. The Forest School Leader will monitor the site so that it does not become overused.

## **Impact**

The success of forest school allows the children to grow in confidence as a result of the freedom, time and space they are given in their learning. This allows them to demonstrate independence at each individual child's rate. Activities such as sharing tools and participating in play help teach the children to work together as a group, which strengthens their bonds and social skills.

Assessment of children's knowledge and skills are made through observation at Forest School sessions and recorded on termly assessment grids. These are reported at parents' evenings and in an end of year report.