

Forest School at St. Paul's



What is Forest School?

“An inspirational process that offers children, (young people and adults) regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning in a woodland environment”

O'Brien & Murray (2008).

What is the history behind the initiative?

Originally a concept developed in Wisconsin in 1927.

1950s: Introduced in Sweden and Denmark.

1994: Introduced to the UK by Bridgwater College in Somerset and has seen unprecedented growth throughout the UK since.



Why go outdoors? Research on benefits of Outdoor Education?

• Educational Philosophies

- Child-centred education (Froebel)
- Learn by doing linked to real life (Dewey)
- Natural environment feeds creativity (Steiner)
- Importance of space to move (McMillan)

• Educational Research

- Development of Physical Literacy (Whitehead 2010)
- Increased physical activity (Mygind 2007)
- Increased motor development (Fjortoft 2004)
- Better understanding of risk (Gill 2007)
- Improved well being and mental health (Louv 2005)
- Children need to move to learn (Ouvry 2003)
- All postural behaviour comes from balance (Goddard Blythe 2005)



Why do we run Forest School at St. Paul's?

- * Builds independence
- * Curiosity
- * Spatial awareness
- * Social skills
- * Risk management
- * Problem solving
- * Self-discovery
- * Increased self esteem
- * Exploration of senses
- * Motor development
- * Team building
- * Cross- curricular skills
- * Creativity
- * Imagination



Why move lessons to a forest?

Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework

- Communication and language
- Physical development
- Personal, social and emotional development
- Understanding the world

Outdoor Classroom Culture

- Discover the information themselves through investigation
- Experience topics first hand and relating them to real life situations
- Learn to work as part of a team
- Multi- Sensory/ Whole child development
- Physical development and co-ordination, gross and fine motor skills
- Learn to take appropriate risks
- Develop a love and respect for nature.
- Learn skills they can use in real life situations.
- Solve problems

Organisation of Forest School at St. Paul's

- One session per week
- Rolling programme of activities.
- Wooded area of the playground/local area/Glebe
- Linked to curriculum: draw upon the natural environment to enhance learning.
- Involve aspects of child-initiated learning.
- Focus on individual child's achievements and next steps for progression.
- Small groups
- Old, warm clothes



Questions...

How do I know my child is safe?

High staff : child ratios

Fully trained

Vast experience

Secure site

Children learn rules by games & songs

Children involved in risk assessment

Safe practise for tool use

What can I do to help?

- Talk to them about Forest School in a positive way.
- Ask questions
- Make sure they bring their change of clothes every week.

What will the children be doing?

- Identifying nature
- Using tools (Peelers, knives, saws)
- Lighting fires
- Cooking on a campfire

Yes, we know how old they are!!

Does the weather prevent Forest School from taking place?

No! (apart from very high winds, lightning)

What does my child need to wear?

Winter

- Coat, woolly hat, gloves & scarf
- School waterproof trousers and jacket
- Hoodie, t-shirt and joggers (not expensive ones please!)
- Wellington boots & thick socks

Summer

- Sunhat, sun cream
- Sturdy shoes or wellingtons & thick socks
- Cagoule
- Long sleeve/ trousers