

Howley Grange 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 developed from the Scandinavian education system and it is all about children and young people building self esteem and independence through exploring and experiencing the natural world. Forest Schools is a long-term programme, delivered by trained Forest School Leaders, within the natural environment of our school grounds.

Each Forest School programme is tailored to meet the needs of individuals within that group and is continuously developed as the children grow in confidence, skills and understanding.

The ethos of Forest School allows learners the time and space to develop skills, interests and understanding through practical, hands-on experiences. It also allows teaching staff to step back and observe the children, in order to then encourage and inspire individuals to achieve, through careful support and structuring of activities.



Where will my child be going?

Howley Grange Forest School is within the school grounds in an area behind the nursery buildings. We have both large, established trees and younger saplings and shrubs. Our site includes a designated fire pit, digging area and log pile to encourage invertebrates to make their home. The site is safe and is thoroughly risk assessed and managed appropriately by trained professionals before every session.



"Forest School is an inspirational process that offers children and young people opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self esteem, through hands on learning experiences in a local woodland environment."

National definition: by Forest School (England) Network

What will my child be doing?

The Forest School routine includes preparing to go outside by dressing in appropriate outdoor waterproofs and wellies, these are provided by yourselves. It is expected that children will come to school in casual, suitable clothes on Forest School days. **Children should have wellingtons and a Forest School bag containing a complete change of clothes and a pair of warm gloves/hat/water bottle in school on their session days.** Forest School will run all year round and in all weathers except thunderstorms and high winds, which may be dangerous.

The child led ethos of Forest Schools means that once at the site the children can choose what to participate in, carefully supported and encouraged by trained adults.

Possible activities may include:

- Researching mini beasts
- Natural crafts - making necklaces or dream catchers from willow, collages from natural materials, weaving with long grasses etc ...
- Mud/ice sculptures
- Shelter building and knot tying
- Using tools such as: potato peelers, pen knives and bow saws.
- Cooking food on a camp fire

Sessions are planned around the individual's and classes needs, and built upon each week. All Forest School Leaders are qualified through nationally recognised and accredited training, therefore ensuring Forest School is a high-quality learning experience. 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 the development and consolidation of skills and understanding in a natural environment.

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

Forest Schools supports the complete development of the child:

- Health and fitness - Being active in an outdoor, natural environment.
- Increased emotional wellbeing - Encouraging greater independence and resilience.
- Social development - Communicating, and negotiating with peers 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 - Multi-sensory, real-life learning.
- Individualised learning - Careful observation allows adults to tailor support to children's own interests and stage of development.
 - Curriculum Links - 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 our Forest Schools programme. Forest School leaders are fully trained in risk assessment and emergency outdoor first aid. Our Forest School has an annual risk assessment, risk assessments for activities and ones for individual tool use too; trained adult helpers; first aid and emergency equipment. Some of the activities the children may participate in are 'higher-risk activities' such as, campfire cooking or tool use. However, these activities are not available to the children until certain behaviours and boundaries are established. Children are encouraged and supported in recognising and managing risk for themselves, through real life situations and experiences.