



**ST. ANNE'S C.E.(VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL**



**FOREST SCHOOLS POLICY**

**'Together with God, Making Learning a Life Long Friend'**

Approved:	25.1.2023
Review Date:	31.1.2026

We are a Church of England School and our policies are written with a commitment to our Christian Character, which is rooted in the Bible.

*Start children off on the way they should go and even when they are old they will not turn from it (Proverbs 22:6)*

The ethos of Forest School (FS) at St. Anne's is founded on children's (learners) fundamental right to explore, expand and access the environment beyond the classroom setting. We believe in the children's right to experience the natural world, in particular our woodland area; and learn how to manage the risks and experiences they have while developing their resilience and weather tolerance. Healthy emotional wellbeing will be enhanced by social interactions with their peers through creative play, investigation and problem solving. As a Christian school we aspire in all we learn and do to be guided by a Christian ethos and hope that in all we learn and do we can find ways to serve each other and our world.

The main guiding principle of FS is to gain the understanding of the 'how' we learn not the 'what' have we learned. The learners, not a formalized planning structure with the limitations this creates, fundamentally guides the planning. This means in practice encouraging the learners to play and direct their own learning. The FS leader is there to scaffold, observe and sometimes provide the drive towards this learning. The FS Lead has recently invested in 'Alfresco Learning' which is an outdoor learning company who provide planning and ideas for National Curriculum subjects across all age ranges. This allows us to give the learners a scaffold on which to build their exploration if required but does not restrict their own learning.

The outdoor learning area, and specifically the woodland, are central to supporting this unique way of learning. Learners will experience weather changes, seasonal growth and decay, ecosystems and microenvironments and all the vibrancy associated with nature from above, below and all around them. They will have opportunity to notice how their own actions can affect the area and develop a relationship with the woodland through all their senses, sounds, smells, textures and tastes. Linked throughout this will be layers

of cultural, historical, spiritual and mythological understanding, from plant uses through the ages to care of our environment.

At St Anne's Primary School, we aim to offer every class the FS experience for half a term. The sessions will be run in blocks of 6 weeks with each session at least 1 ½ hours in duration. To enable successful and smooth operating of FS, the Head Teacher, Governors and Parents will be kept informed of the aims, objectives and outcomes in a variety of ways throughout the year.

FS is carried out with an adult to learner ratio with a minimum of 1:15 whilst within school grounds, but additional adult support will be provided where appropriate for learners who have SEND or additional needs. This ratio of support staff to learners enables a level of support so that all can participate in practical and physical activities. When using tools, a definitive adult to child ratio is required, please see section on tool policies. A separate activity risk assessment will have been carried out for each activity; when any hazards associated with that activity are at risk of causing harm, the type of activity and competence of the learners, will determine ratios for each activity. The support staff are there to enable all learners to develop and build on their self-esteem and confidence. All support staff and helpers supporting the FS leader are DBS checked. All support staff are first aid trained and Mrs. Bailey has completed a specific outdoor FS first aid qualification (see end of policy for first aid information). All support staff involved in FS, are required to sign and date a form to show that they have read the FS handbook, appropriate risk assessments and understand the safety guidelines.

FS aims to develop the independent learning skills by encouraging learners to lead at their own pace through their own interests. Linking with our SEND policy to support learners in acquiring and communicating information at individual rates.

We aim to promote equality of opportunity for all members of our school community and promote good relationships between people with different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. As a long-term process with a higher learner to support ratio, we aim to promote trust, acceptance and empathy for the world around them through meaningful learning and the development of relationships. Learners should feel safe and secure in the FS environment; adults are there to encourage verbal and non-verbal communication and make sure that these help others feel respected and valued. By allowing learners to recognize their value within the school and wider community, their confidence and competence increases and they feel that their opinions are valued and respected.

To achieve an inclusive ethos. We ensure that all activities and resources are available for all, i.e. tools are an appropriate size. It is also a school aim to make as much of the site as fully accessible as possible with clear pathways for those less mobile. Opportunities will be provided for the learners to develop their social skills by working together and trying new activities, sharing resources and learning styles with others. The learners are encouraged to explore their individual learning styles as appropriate and have time and space to grow. FS shall use a reflection time to discuss feelings and

emotions to help develop their self-awareness. Time is built in to share and discuss historical, culture and beliefs through a range of stories and activities.

At FS we encourage positive behaviour and learning throughout. We believe that this can be achieved by building relationships and trust. It is vital for the learner to trust adults if the experience is to be a positive one. Through building relationships in Forest Schools, adults can gain an understanding of the learner's emotional difficulties (frustration/anger, etc.) and the triggers that may cause behavioural changes. As trust is built, we can teach the learner coping strategies and use reflection opportunities to talk about feelings and emotions enabling the learner to become emotionally literate and aware of feelings and aware of who we are. Adults model positive behaviour and create a positive site atmosphere where everybody is treated as equals. Consistent boundaries give the learner security, and enable them to know what to expect.

A good way is to involve and engage the learner in setting the rules and boundaries. Rules and boundaries are reinforced at the beginning of each session. Setting up opportunities for the learner to learn to work together; developing social skills, sharing resources, trying new activities. FS naturally creates a calming environment and so activities and exploration will be designed to support and encourage this. Setting up activities enabling the learner to achieve helps with self-esteem.

#### **Forest School Qualifications**

- \* Mrs. Janet Bailey
- \* FS OCN Level 3 in Forest School Leadership. Training 2019-2020
- \* First Aid in the Outdoors ITC first (16hr) Expiries: 29.11.2025

