

Great Crosby Catholic Primary School



An Introduction to Forest School

History of Forest School

- Forest school originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s, where people have a much closer cultural connection with the woodland. This spread into the UK in the mid 90s but actually the idea of Forest School is much older than that.
- We have been learning longer outside with our elders and peers in a natural environment than we have inside in a formal classroom.
- There is something very special and instinctive about Forest School.

What is Forest School?

- Forest school is an unique learning style suitable for all ages.
- It improves physical health, mental well being and spirituality.
- Emphasis is on self development, team work and learning through play.
- There are no tests to pass or fail. Instead children are praised for good effort and skill sharing therefore leaving with a positive experience.
- Social skills are developed as children learn to cooperate and compromise all in a fun and nurturing environment.

What is Forest School?

- Encourages creativity, fine motor and gross motor skills and safe risk taking.
- Develops friendships and emotional development as children discover how to learn and manage when things don't go to plan
- Develops communication and language skills as they interact and share experiences
- Improves concentration through retaining important information of how to keep safe

Forest School Sessions

Our Forest School sessions run throughout the year. This enables the children of Great Crosby to experience all seasons, and means going to the woods in all weathers (except for high winds).

There is no such thing as bad weather - just bad clothing!!

Our children have full waterproof suits and wellies which they use everytime we attend our sessions. This enables them all to fully engage in all activities.

Typical Session

A typical session will follow a simple routine and should be at least two hours. Children will walk to woods and sit around in fire circle to greet each other and discuss rules and boundaries in the woods. We will discuss what activities are available if children choose to take part - otherwise staff will follow children's own interests. In our experience the woods is a natural stimulating environment where children will always be engaged and stimulated.

Benefits of Forest School

Children discover how they learn best by:

- developing their personal, social and emotional skills
- challenging themselves and become self motivated.
- working through practical problems alongside their peers
- experiencing success and achievement
- developing their communication and language skills
- improving their fine motor and gross motor skills
- exploring the world through all their senses
- improving well being and spirituality
- providing children with a sense of belonging

Effects of Forest School on Mental Health

Children's wellbeing cannot be addressed fully without including the state of their mental health. A growing number of research studies show that students across the world are recording an increasing number of mental health disorders, such as stress, depression, (ADHD), hyperactivity, panic attacks and other mental illnesses. Mental health issues definitely undermines children's capabilities to deal with normal demands of life, slows their growth and development as well as their resilience. This has a major affect on their participation and connectedness to education. Forest school sessions offer opportunities of reducing the impacts of mental illness amongst children through their engagement in and with nature.

Our responsibility for the wellbeing of our children

- Forest School allows children to work in smaller groups with trained staff - enabling them to spend a portion of their educational journey in a natural setting.
- Promoting children's well being is a major responsibility for Great Crosby.
- Nature in itself is an anti-depressant.
- Being in nature gives us a better sense of well being. Even on cold days you feel invigorated and energised.