



# St Michael's Forest School



## **What is Forest School?**

Forest School offers children regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a natural environment.

In Forest School we place the emphasis on the journey rather than the outcome, providing emotional and physical space for child-led learning to come alive.

Children are nurtured to:

- Explore and discover at their own pace
- Initiate and drive their own learning
- Experience regular success
- Develop positive relationships with themselves, others and their natural environment
- Learn practical skills in a safe environment

## **When and where does Forest School take place?**

We are lucky enough to have a Forest School site at the back of our field. Wander up the bank, through the willows, past the tepee, through a gate and into a magical world of imagination, creativity and risk taking.

Currently, Forest School takes place over a number of afternoons. Acorn Class and a small group of ELSA children attend every week, while other children enjoy seasonal visits every term.

Forest School runs all year - whatever the weather!

## **Who leads Forest School?**

All sessions are lead by a Forest School Level 3 Qualified leader. The leader is responsible for the overall safety of all participants, including volunteers, and carries out a risk assessment of the site and any activities.

Sessions are planned by the leader to cater for all the children's needs and are adapted by the children's interests. The leader is assisted by a Forest School assistant, who is First Aid trained.

## **What do Volunteer helpers do?**

Volunteers help to support each session. Depending on the activities planned, helpers can be used to support children with activities such as using tools or erecting shelters or tree hammocks. Volunteers also help to provide 'extra eyes' to ensure children are safe. Often, volunteers help by listening to children who have something to show or tell and thus develop positive relationships with the children by spending precious time talking in a relaxed setting.

## **What do the children do?**

Children can be found exploring through self-led play, storytelling, role playing and discovering their natural world. Children safely learn practical skills using a range of tools and delight in mastering these skills week on week. Swings are made, bug houses explored, dens designed, hot chocolate and popcorn cooked on the open fire.

Taking turns, co-operation, sitting and listening are all skills you will witness if you join us in the woods.

The children's responsibilities include:

- ensuring they are 'ready' to visit the Forest with appropriate clothing for the weather
- thinking about what equipment they may want for the session depending on what activities they want to do
- returning the site as they found it, ensuring all rubbish is collected and tools are safely stored
- away

The whole process helps children to take responsibility both for themselves and their actions.