

## What do they say about Forest School?

An evaluation of two Forest School projects by the New Economics Foundation\* highlighted how they can increase young people's self-confidence and self-esteem. The evaluation also added:

"The Forest School setting is adaptable and allows for a flexible approach to learning, which can accommodate a range of learning styles.

Learning styles are the different ways in which children best absorb and process information. Some of them are:

- Kinaesthetic (learning by doing)
- Auditory
- Visual

Forest School is an approach that can allow leaders to shape teaching methods to an individual's learning style. Research in America (Taylor et al., 1998; Fjortoft, 2004) has found that children who play in natural environments undertake more diverse, creative and imaginative play, forming an important part of a child's development."

The report also states:

"Forest School benefits many children and should be used on a wider basis as a vital part of children's outdoor learning experience, and to provide many more children with the opportunity to experience this as part of their overall education."

## What can Forest School do?

- Build and develop group work and co-operation skills
- Increase children's confidence, initiative, and independence
- Provide a supportive learning environment to suit an individual's needs and learning styles
- Increase practical and planning skills
- Increase an individual's appreciation and knowledge of the natural world
- The freedom to explore using multiple senses
- Allow children to learn while having fun!

**Forest Education: A spark of inspiration!**

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# Forest School





## What is Forest School?



Forest Schools originated in Denmark in the early 20th century as a way of teaching children about the natural world, particularly woodlands, which benefit our environment and provide a great setting for education and recreation.

Forest Education aims to increase the understanding and appreciation, particularly among young people, of the environmental, social, and economic potential of trees, woodlands and forests.

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

As well as teaching associated skills, Forest school offers the opportunity to help deliver and complement aspects of the school curriculum through a medium of outdoor play and discovery, providing a variety of opportunities for learning, particularly for those who do not do as well in the school classroom, complementing our school vision statement. Because it is viewed as a process, with regular visits to one (or many) sites, tasks of increasing complexity can be mastered and associated social skills learned.

### Risk Assessment

Before any site is used, a full risk assessment is carried out. This includes all ground features and conditions, plants which may pose a hazard, right up to actual or potential hazards in the canopy.

All activities are also assessed to remove any unnecessary risk.

However, with outdoor education, it is impossible to remove all elements of risk. We do however have a "duty of care" to minimise real risk as far as is reasonable, whilst maintaining elements of perceived risk - that sense of wonder, exhilaration and excitement.

## Activities at Brixham C of E Forest School

### Maintaining a camp:

Unless a base area is already established, one of the first activities is to set up a camp. The children will work together to plan and build a shelter and construct a fire site with seating.

### Learning to safely and responsibly use hand tools;

The children will be introduced to the safe use of tools with the emphasis on responsibility for themselves and each other. Some of the tools they will learn to use include: knives, bow saws, axes, hand drills, etc.



### Building and lighting a fire safely:

Lighting the fire is an important aspect of Forest School. The fire site acts as a focus for the group but is also where the cooking is done and where the marshmallows are toasted at the end of the session.



## Learning basic woodland crafts and management Becoming 'Forest Guardians':

Children will practice such skills as coppicing, planting, caring for hedgerows, looking after and hopefully increasing the biodiversity of the sites. There is also the



opportunity to learn about all the creatures and plants that share the site.

### Playing games:

A variety of games and activities with an environmental basis take place using the area and materials which encourage the development of personal and social responsibilities as well as promoting citizenship.

### What they need:

Forest school will take place regardless of the weather, so this means that children are likely to get wet and muddy. To avoid getting physically uncomfortable, children will need to have items such as a waterproof coat, hat and boots, and if possible, leggings. Warm clothing in the winter will also be appropriate.