

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

Forest Schools supports the holistic development of the child:

- Health and fitness - Being active in an outdoor, natural environment.
- Increased emotional wellbeing - There is research available supporting this.
- 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 Schools supports many areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, National Curriculum and the Every Child Matters agenda.



### Health and Safety

The health and safety of all participants is central to everything done within a Forest Schools programme. Forest School leaders are fully trained in risk assessment and emergency outdoor first aid. Every Forest School will have; a Health and Safety policy; a seasonally and daily risk assessed site; risk assessments for activities; 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.

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# Forest School

@ Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park

## 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 Schools?

Forest Schools has developed from the Scandinavian education system and is 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 practitioners within a natural environment (not necessarily a Forest!). Each Forest School programme is tailored to meet the needs of individuals within that group and is continuously developed as the children/young people grow in confidence, skills and understanding.

The ethos of Forest Schools allows learners the time and space to develop skills, interests and understanding through practical, hands-on experiences. It also allows practitioners to step back and observe the children/young people in order to then encourage and inspire individuals to achieve through careful scaffolding and facilitating.



## Where will my child be going?

Every Forest School is different, some are within school or nursery grounds and some are in woodland areas in nature reserves or private estates. Some have ponds; some have meadows; some have dense shrubs and others are more open. All sites have some natural features (some may import natural materials such as sticks, logs, leaves and seeds) and all sites are safe; they are thoroughly risk assessed and managed appropriately by trained practitioners.

*"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 varies depending on the site, however it may include; preparing to go out by dressing in outdoor clothes such as waterproofs; travelling to the site; singing special songs and sharing stories. Forest Schools will run all year round and in all weathers (unless weather conditions are 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:

- Hunting for minibeasts and/or pond dipping
- Natural crafts - making necklaces from elder, crowns or dreamcatchers from willow, collages from natural materials, weaving with long grasses, tree cookies, etc
- Mud sculptures
- Shelter building and knot tying
- Tree climbing
- Using tools for a purpose - such as peeling bark from sticks with potato peelers to make toasting forks.
- Fire building and cooking on a camp fire

Sessions are planned around the individual's and group's needs, and built upon each week. All Forest School Leaders are qualified through nationally recognised and accredited training, therefore ensuring Forest Schools 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.



